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THE SECRET
OF
TABLE ROCK.



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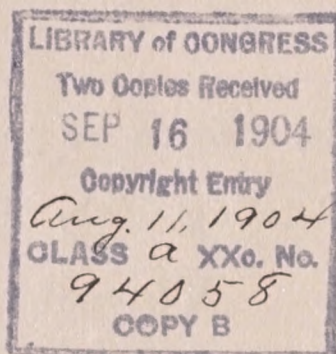
A Composite Tale, written by members of the Winter
Evening Reading Club, of Saint Albans,
Vermont.

The first and three last chapters were written by the same hand. Each
of the other chapters was written by a different
member of the Club,

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The Secret of Table Rock.

CHAPTER 1.

Bitter Creek is not a particularly alluring name for a town. As it is located in Sweetwater county, it suggests a touch of that fine irony which marked the speech and general mental attitude of those pioneers,—strong, grim, rough men,—who are responsible for the nomenclature as well as the development of Wyoming. Nobody could expect a place named Bitter Creek to attract the caravan of civilization, so nobody should, in reason, be disappointed at finding the buildings primitive and the population sparse. In point of fact, Bitter Creek holds no place on the map, except as a rather unimportant railway station around which, at irregular intervals and with no attempt at orderly arrangement, are scattered a few rough dwellings. Its tribute to commerce is a small and dejected "general store", whose proprietor, still more dejected, is evidently long on leisure and canned goods, but short on hope and customers. To the traveler or tourist it offers only natural attractions, such as they are, and the hospitality of a rough frame hostelry, the only ambitious feature of which is the name gracing its swinging sign board—"The Great Western Hotel".

The place is not lacking, however, in features which might appeal to the artistic eye or to the geological nose. It nestles at the foot of a knob-like hill called "Table Rock"—a striking instance of false nomenclature, as this eminence, although mostly rock to be sure, bears as little resemblance to a table as might be. It is, in fact, a singularly shapeless and nondescript pile of broken boulders, no two of which bear the slightest apparent geological relationship to each other.

A few scraggly bushes cling desperately to the interstices, and on closer inspection it is evident that at some period (probably when the railway was building) the restless hunger for precious metals inspired some prospector to take sundry bites out of the sides, and to disintegrate a few of the boulders with giant powder. Apparently the queer, mixed-up formation failed to yield any profitable results, and the prospector followed the railway construction to fresh fields.

Around the base of Table Rock sweeps the stream from which the station takes its name—Bitter Creek. This also belies its appellation, for its waters are to all appearance normal and wholesome, and indeed are very suggestive of angling possibilities as they gurgle and tumble musically along their rocky bed at the bottom of a canyon some thirty feet deep which would, but for a bridge, cut off communication between the railway station on one side and "The Great Western Hotel" and "New York Store" on the other.

On a certain day in September, in the year of grace 1902, as the 5:27 from the East was about due, two men stood on the platform of the station at Bitter Creek. One of these was the station agent, whose presence was purely official and perfunctory.

The other was a young man about thirty who very evidently did not belong to Bitter Creek. He wore, to be sure, a rough, plain tweed suit quite appropriate to the place, but it hung extremely well from the shoulders. He was about six feet, athletic build, with keen blue eyes, clear-cut, smooth-shaven face, and a general alert and well-groomed air that suggested larger types of civilization than those

which surrounded him. Being only a man, with comprehension as vague as yours or mine of the mystical cosmic forces which order our goings and comings in accordance with some higher law, he thought he stood on the station platform simply in obedience to an idle impulse, which had suggested that he look upon the express as it passed and refresh his faith in the actual existence, somewhere, of large cities, many people, and the strenuous movement of twentieth century life and affairs. So little do we comprehend of the ordering of things!

Presently, with a shriek and a roar, with much dust and sharp grinding of air brakes, the through express from the East hurled itself around the curve and grudgingly came to a stop. The great locomotive panted impatiently; the engineer, who was five minutes late, once more silently registered his opinion of certain "freak legislation" which compelled this stop whether there were any passengers for the station or not, and looked back for his starting signal. This was promptly forthcoming, and the wheels had scarcely more than touched the point of rest than with a sharp hiss of steam they began to revolve again, and with clang of bell and exultant blast from whistle the express resumed its westward flight. But short as the stop was, it brought a surprise to the men on the station platform, for a passenger alighted. This was such an unusual event as to be mildly surprising in any case, but the passenger in this particular case was a young woman who would have alighted from a drawing-room car in the Grand Central station in perfect harmony with her surroundings. This conveys at least a partial idea of how amazing her advent was to the small audience on the platform at Bitter Creek.

She simply stepped from the sleeper, and stood perfectly motionless, with a singularly absent, impassive, introspective look upon her face and in her eyes, until the train moved off again.

Of course this young person was beautiful. Had her figure been angular or squat instead of a delight to

the eye of artist or sculptor, her carriage awkward instead of graceful, her complexion parchment instead of roselike, her hair brick-color instead of golden brown, her eyes commonplace instead of deep and tender violet, or her age—perish the thought!—64 instead of 24, then had this tale taken shape only as a dry article in some scientific magazine—or perchance remained unwritten. Ah! mystic power and wonder of female loveliness, how much of joy and sorrow, weal and woe are woven in with thee through all the ages of mankind!

The unexpected passenger stood silent and perfectly motionless until the engine of the departing express shrilled its defiant farewell. Then she started as one suddenly awakened from sleep and turning with a gesture expressive of mingled surprise, fright, and despair to the station agent ejaculated,

"Is it gone?—it cannot have gone!"

"It shorely is gone, ma'am," replied that official, calmly.

"But what shall I do? I did not mean to stop here—I must not!"

The confines of the station platform being decidedly limited, the young man in the tweed suit could not help hearing and seeing all that transpired, and with a natural impulse of his age and sex he stepped forward, and doffing his hat said,

"Pardon me, madam, but can I be of use in any way? I have no card with me but this professional one which perhaps will serve," and handed the fair stranger a bit of pasteboard upon which she read at a glance the words

John Gardner, M. E.

614 Mutual Life Building,
New York.

Another glance, quick and comprehensive, supplementing this information with the word "gentleman" written all over the young man who had addressed her, she replied at once with perfect frankness and graceful self-possession,

"I thank you indeed and gratefully accept your kindness. I, too, am from New York. My cards, with the rest of my personal belongings are flying westward on that dreadful train, but

my name is Grace De Costa. Papa is a banker on Broad Street."

"Mr. De Costa's name is quite familiar to me, though I have not the pleasure of knowing him personally."

"I am indeed in a most strange and embarrassing predicament. I am on my way to visit an aunt in Ogden. I stepped off the train here most foolishly, and now it has gone and—oh! what shall I do?" her hands clasping with a little gesture of despair.

"Unfortunately," said Gardner, "there is no other through train until to-morrow, so the only thing to do is to make the best of the circumstances, which are annoying indeed but not at all serious after all. Obviously the first thing to do is to wire your aunt and allay any anxiety on her part, and the Pullman conductor to instruct him about your belongings. Then, with your approval, I shall take you to the one hotel here, which is by no means luxurious in its appointments but eminently clean and respectable. Mrs. Lynch, the proprietor's wife, is an excellent, motherly soul who will delight in making you as comfortable as possible, and to-morrow you can resume your journey, with no great harm done and one of the stumbling-blocks we all have to encounter in life's journey safely passed."

Gardner's cheerful tone and ready mastery of the situation seemed to reassure Miss De Costa and her charming face lightened perceptibly as she answered,

"You are very good and all your suggestions obviously the right ones. Thank you again most gratefully."

The telegrams were despatched and the young man and woman so strangely met, set forth along the road which led from the station across the bridge over the canyon, toward "The Great Western Hotel", which was in sight not more than ten minutes walk distant.

Gardner was silent, feeling that further comment upon the situation would naturally come from his companion, and as they passed out of the station agent's zone of hearing she spoke.

"I do not know what you can think

of this singular and apparently most stupid accident. In fact I must confess I do not know what to think of it myself. Do you believe in hypnotism?"—this with a frank, direct glance into the young man's face.

"In this age of dawning knowledge of things new and things old but forgotten, it is hardly safe to disbelieve anything. Certainly the phenomena of hypnotism are too well authenticated to admit of a doubt that this strange influence exists," he replied.

"Well, it has certainly had no part in my experience or interest before, and only the want of a satisfactory and more commonplace explanation suggests it now," said Miss De Costa. "I can only give you the simple facts: I was quietly seated in the car reading a book—one of the novels of the day and very ordinary one at that. I remember the grinding of the brakes, the slackened speed of the train and the voice of a trainman as he called out 'Bitter Creek'. It is evident that I must have put my book on the seat, or dropped it, deliberately walked out of the car and remained standing as you saw me until the train was again under way. I cannot understand or explain it in any way, but I give you my word that from the second of time in which I heard the name of the station called out until the shriek of the whistle awakened it, my consciousness was an absolute blank. I was before, and am, so far as I can see since this inexplicable lapse, perfectly well and normal in every way. Can you suggest any possible explanation? Could it have been hypnotic influence? and if so how or by whom exerted? I knew no one in the car. Or do you see any indication that I am not in ordinary mental and physical condition?"

Gardner looked at her and did not need to assure himself that she was in every way lovely and natural, and in no way open to suspicion of mental or physical defect.

"The hypnotic theory is of course possible, but apparently not at all probable," he said. "It is a well established fact in mental science that in all persons, no matter how perfect their condition, the mind is subject

to an occasional sudden and inexplicable lapse. The mental process 'skips a beat', as the heart will sometimes do, or as watches and other delicate pieces of mechanism will. Nobody knows why or how this occurs, but there are many striking instances on record. Of course during this fraction of time, the thinking mind is asleep or gone and action is guided entirely by the sub-conscious mind—or in other words by instinct and not reason. It seems most probable to me that you have experienced one of these curious lapses. At all events, you are evidently none the worse for it, and possibly in some way we do not understand, it may all be for your good fortune."

The charming smile which acknowledged Gardner's success in cheering and reassuring his companion should have been, and perhaps was felt to be, an ample reward.

By this time they had reached "The Great Western Hotel." Mrs. Lynch, in her ample and spotless white apron, stood on the piazza to receive them.

Down in the bottom of the canyon, about forty yards up stream from the bridge, where the current of Bitter Creek, broken by a long ridge of rock was turned aside in part to form a still, deep pool, a man sat on a boulder fishing. He was of uncertain age—it might be anywhere from fifty-five to sixty-five,—and of medium build and stature. He was roughly clad and in garments well worn—but he, too, bore no brand of Bitter Creek.

As Gardner and Miss De Costa crossed the bridge, this man looked up at them with natural idle curiosity. Gardner was on the up-stream side and apparently aroused no interest in the fisherman's mind. As they neared the further end of the bridge, Miss De Costa instinctively turned her head and glanced behind her companion's shoulders down into the canyon, with natural interest in the picturesque gorge with its wild rocky bed and sides, and the silvery stream fretting and fuming its devious way among the boulders. It was but an instantaneous gesture,

for she was listening with keen interest to Gardner's explanation. The vision of her charming face flashed upon the fisherman's sight as the object flashes on a kodak lens when the shutter is snapped. But in that instant every trace of blood seemed to drop from his face, leaving it a cold, ashen gray. For fully a minute he sat there as motionless as if he had been petrified and become as one of the boulders that surrounded him in all shapes and on all sides.

Then, moving in a queer, constrained, unseemingly kind of way, he arose, reeled in his line and made his way by some familiar devious path that climbed among the rocks and by gradual stages up the steep side of the canyon, to a small plain cottage which nestled at the foot of the almost perpendicular side of Table Rock hill, and around the circle of its base just far enough to be out of the range of vision from the railway station. The only door of the cottage stood open and a woman, plainly but neatly dressed, with a strong and kindly face, was arranging the evening meal upon the table.

The man entered, still walking slowly and stiffly and dropped into the first chair as one greatly fatigued. His ashen lips parted and words seemed to be propelled through them by some mechanical means quite apart from the man in his ordinary state.

"She is here."

"Who is here?" asked the woman.

"The last person in the world that human mind could conceive of as being here. A creature of the one blood and name which it must please the Infinite to hurl through space upon this one obscure point in the earth's surface. Ferdinand De Costa's daughter."

As Gardner and Miss De Costa entered "The Great Western Hotel", an excellent clock, "made in Waterbury, Conn.", which occupied a responsible position on the wall of the entrance hall, struck six, in such a prompt, business-like way as should carry conviction to all hearers that

the clock was quite right about it, and it was just six o'clock.

At this particular second all such clocks as were assigned to duty in the Borough of Manhattan, city of Greater New York, and animated by a proper self-respect and sense of responsibility, should have been striking eight.

At least one of them discharged its duty promptly, albeit with more leisurely and musical utterance than its distant relative in Bitter Creek. It was a plain but elegant affair, and its post of duty was the mantel of a small private dining room in the Waldorf-Astoria.

The occupants of the room at this particular moment were two men—James Morley, age fifty, with ten per cent. deducted in appearance for good care, frugal habits, and the best of grooming, capitalist, financier, and if not already one of the "captains of industry", at least a first lieutenant in the direct line of promotion. Paul Raymond, age sixty-three, with ten per cent. added for over-devotion to scientific study and research, clean-cut, intellectual face and thoughtful, nearsighted eyes, expert in chemistry and mineralogy.

The two men had dined and, the waiter dismissed, were giving their attention to cigars and a bottle of tawny port.

"Have you heard anything from your emissary yet?" asked Morley.

"Not yet. He should have reached his destination about forty-eight hours since. It may be days and perhaps even weeks before he will have anything definite to report, but I shall expect by to-morrow to receive a wire from him in the cipher code we arranged and will advise you as soon as I do. You and I are such old and good friends, James," added the older man, "that we do not need much speech to understand each other,—but I want to say that I appreciate most fully the generous confidence which prompted you, upon my mere unexplained suggestion that I 'thought it worth while', to assume without question or hesitation the risk and expense of despatching a representative chosen by me to the far

ends of the continent on a mission the nature, duration, or cost of which you knew nothing whatever about."

"Not a word, old friend," said Morley. "I know your reasons were good ones, and whether you accomplish whatever you are looking for or not, it is all the same. The best of us are only experimentalists and I am quite willing to take a chance with you. Pray do not feel the slightest obligation to explain until your own good time—or ever, for that matter."

Raymond reached out his hand in silence and pressed that of his friend, and their eyes met in a look of trust and mutual regard that must have been the growth of many years.

"My own good time' has come, James, at least for confiding to you in brief what my purpose and idea are. You may have noticed—or quite as likely did not, since it was not conspicuously mentioned in the daily press—that about two years ago a German chemist discovered a new mineral substance. His name was Karl and he gave it to his discovery, which he called Karlium. While entirely different from Radium, its properties are hardly less remarkable, and like that marvelous substance, it has thus far been recovered only in the most minute quantities. I suppose the entire known supply of the pure mineral could be held in this salt spoon. I was much interested in the discovery and have given a good deal of study to its nature and the conditions under which it has been found. If I am not woefully mistaken in my deductions—which is of course possible—and if nature has not swerved aside from certain pretty well-defined rules in the formation and trend of geological strata—which is also possible—there should be in the vicinity of Bitter Creek, Wyoming, if anywhere on this continent, a very considerable outcropping of rock bearing Karlium. If the mineral can be found, even in comparatively small quantity—which is likely to be the case in any event—its value would be almost incalculable. The chance seemed to me at least worthy of careful investigation. That is the story in a nutshell, James."

"You speak with the care and the modesty of a true scientist, my dear Paul," said Morley. "I quite agree with you that the chance is worthy of investigation. I am too well supplied with this world's goods as it is, and too old a hand at the game of finance to be dazzled by golden dreams, or worried at their fading. So we'll just put the whole business up on the shelf and let it rest until you get results. Just one more question, though:—How is your agent to determine whether this mysterious metal exists in the rock or not, without the usual mining appliances?"

"John Gardner is a thoroughly competent chemist, geologist, and mineralogist. He is absolutely trustworthy, intelligent, and fully understands my theories about this mineral and the conditions under which it is likely to be found. He has taken with him a large carboy of combined acids, forming practically a new chemical agent of my own discovery. Unless the country rock is more refractory than is at all probable, a small quantity of this liquid poured upon the surface will eat its way through the microscopic pores without any other result unless Karlium is encountered, in which case a slight chemical reaction will take place and there will come up to the surface a sort of mist, of light greenish shade and a peculiar odor. I consider this test as conclusive as any that can be made."

"Answer quite satisfactory and complete, as I expected it would be," said Morley. "And now I must go to meet an engagement. Success to your enterprise, old friend, and be assured that if you find what you are looking for there will be no lack of capital for development and a full share of the fruits shall be yours."

With a parting clasp of hands, the two men went their several ways—Morley to meet the engagement at his club, and Raymond to his home up town.

The great city, enmeshed in the Wizard's web of shimmering lights, plunged into its nightly carnival of joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, grace and disgrace, life and death; Table Rock possessed itself and such

secrets or disappointments as might lie in the stony hearts of its nondescript ledges and boulders, in the great, deep, ineffable calm of Nature at the sunset hour; and the Golden Gate Express over the Union Pacific shrieked and thundered in its headlong rush toward the setting sun.

CHAPTER II.

The citizens of Ogden are all proud, and justly proud, of their little city. It is not so near Salt Lake City as to be eclipsed by the glory of the larger place, nor so far away as to render those glories inaccessible. It is fortunately situated, moreover, at the junction of two important railroads and is a busy, prosperous, self-important little place.

Ogden prides itself on its culture and its society. Chief in all Ogden's social, literary, and charitable enterprises is Mrs. Inez Pettis. She is president of the Woman's Club—for Ogden boasts that crowning glory—and president, secretary, or treasurer of every other association in town. Altogether she is like the town; busy, prosperous, and self-important. Her face is mobile and her clear cut features remind one of her brother, Ferdinand De Costa. Her manner is imperious but never dignified. Her house is the finest in Ogden and she takes great pains to make it also the most attractive. She has unlimited pride in all her possessions, especially her horses and her daughters.

One evening Mrs. Pettis was acting as patroness of the annual Charity Ball and beaming with pride and pleasure at the success of the party and the popularity of her daughters. Dolores was, without doubt, the loveliest girl there. Janet was not beautiful like her sister, but it was a question which was the more popular. Mrs. Pettis watched them with gratified pride.

"And I used to mourn over Janet's snub nose," she thought, "and was afraid she'd never be a success on account of it." And she beamed again at the very palpable evidence to the contrary.

"When I see our girls having such good times," she said, turning sud-

denly to her husband, "it just makes me ache for Ferdinand's poor Grace, shut up there in New York, and never going anywhere. I believe I'll have her out here."

Her husband only smiled, being used to his wife's impulsiveness. She did not forget the impulse, however, but returned to the subject the next day.

"Do as you like, my dear," was Mr. Pettis's response.

Mrs. Pettis had a pleasant fiction that she always did as her husband said she should and this was the little formula whereby that fiction was maintained. Her letter to her brother was characteristic.

"My dear Ferdinand," it read, "I suppose you still persist in shutting yourself up in your gloomy old house and never seeing anyone. O, I'm not going to argue or protest. I told you years ago that you were making a fool of yourself and I've really nothing more to say about it. It is your privilege, of course, to let every presentable person in New York forget your existence, but it really isn't fair to Grace. She should be out with other young people. Why, the girl must be nearly twenty-five already! Now, I want to give her some of the good times you've denied her. Ogden is not New York but it will do. She will go everywhere with my girls, and meet everyone she ought to, and I hope will have a good time for once in her life. I do hope you've let her learn to dance! Anyway, give her plenty of pretty gowns and a good allowance—you can afford it—and send her out here for the winter. I want her, and she needs it.

"Yours,

"Inez."

To Mr. Pettis's surprise the invitation was accepted, but he reflected philosophically that one girl more would not make much difference and forgot all about her. Not so his daughters, Dolores and Janet. They and their friends talked of little else during the interval that passed before the day of their cousin's expected arrival.

On that day a group of young people were gathered on the veranda of

the Pettis home. They had all come from playing tennis to rest and have a cup of tea. The Eastern cousin was again the topic of conversation.

"I do wish you could tell us what she's like!" one of the girls said.

"But we can't, you know," replied Janet, "for we've never seen her."

"Her picture is sweet as can be," said Dolores, who was presiding at the tea-table. "One lump or two?"

"Two," replied the young man addressed, promptly. The rest of his speech was drowned in the buzz of talk, but whatever it was, it brought a most becoming blush to Dolores's olive cheeks.

"Uncle Ferdinand is queer," Janet was saying. "He has loads of money but he won't go anywhere or see anybody and I'm sure I don't know what we can ever do with a girl brought up as Grace has been—she won't know how to do anything! And will probably disapprove of everything," she added. "She was brought up in a convent, you know."

"She'll be so horribly proper we shan't dare let you come here, Teddy," said Dolores to a youth, who, with the easy freedom of an intimate friend, was sprawling in the hammock, enjoying a pipe.

"She probably smokes herself, if she comes from New York; all New York girls do," he announced calmly.

In the midst of the laughter and jeers that greeted this remark, Mrs. Pettis appeared on the scene with a telegram in her hand and excitement expressed in every movement.

"Listen to this, girls!" she cried, "Stopped at Bitter Creek and lost train. All right. Expect me to-morrow. Grace De Costa." Now what does she mean by that? I don't call it all right. Why should she leave the train at Bitter Creek, I'd like to know!"

"Perhaps she wanted a cigar," murmured Teddy.

"What's the matter with you, Teddy Underhill," Mrs. Pettis exclaimed. "What on earth should she want with a cigar? And what are you all laughing at? I tell you this is a serious matter."

"I don't see what we can do about

it, mamma," said Dolores, "we shall have to wait till she gets here and explains herself."

"Well, I just hope she can explain," fumed Mrs. Pettis. "I call it scandalous. I told Ferdinand—no, I didn't either, but I meant to. She should have been chaperoned. And now I've got to upset those committee meetings again."

"Your cousin must be an original young lady," said one of the young men as Mrs. Pettis left them. "I was in Bitter Creek once myself."

"Well, she'll soon be here now," said Dolores, rising, "then you will all see what she is for yourself." And with merry plans for the morrow the party broke up.

The unexpected presence of a beautiful, fashionably dressed young lady in her house was the cause of much excitement to the landlady of "The Great Western Hotel," good Mrs. Lynch. She bustled about in hasty efforts to make a place suitable for this stranger, whose attire filled her with awe and a certain half resentment, while her sweet looks and soft voice won her admiration. At last, after exhausting every resource, she left Grace alone in the room assigned to her, announcing as she left that supper would be ready in half an hour.

Grace looked around the plain little room after the landlady left her. Its cleanliness pleased her. Any other discomfort was quite bearable, she thought, and since she was here and must stay, she would cheerfully make the best of it. Since she was here! How strange it was that she should be here at all! How did she ever come to leave her train in that peculiar way, —she, Grace De Costa, whose life had been so wholly uneventful up to now? Now, as she sat there, all that life passed before her mental vision as a panorama.

She thought of the staid old house in ——— street, which was the only home she had ever known. Indeed, it was almost the only house in the city she knew, for she had no mother and her father had no friends. At least, no one ever came to the

house excepting on rare occasions, and then always on business.

She remembered her nurse, the good Marie, who could speak no English, and who told her such wonderful stories. How she had wept when Marie left them and went back to France. And her governess, Miss White; yes, she had loved her too, but never like Marie.

Then had come the two beautiful years in the convent where she had been sent to finish her education. 'Twas here that she had found her one friend, Sister Agatha. Though she had been a general favorite she had become intimate with none of the girls. All her love had been given to the dark-eyed nun, who seemed to her all that was pure, and good, and true. She had been back to see her many times and had always sought her advice and support in her small trials. What would Sister Agatha say of her present position, she wondered.

Then had followed the four quiet years at home with her father. A tear stole softly down her cheek as she thought of him. She seemed now to see his handsome face, so cold and stern to others, so gentle and tender when he was looking on her. How good he had always been to her, she thought! She had been his pet and plaything in babyhood. Then as her mind developed, he had made her, more and more, his companion. He had planned her studies. He had read with her. He had poured out all the treasures of his brilliant intellect for her, giving her the benefit of his wide experience and vast information. Only one subject was forbidden. Once she had ventured to speak of her mother. She remembered now how his face had set at her question.

"Never let me hear you speak of your mother again, Grace," he had said sternly. "The less you know about her the happier you will be," and he had sent her abruptly from the room. She had never dared attempt to break through his iron reserve and mention the subject again.

As she thought of this scene she drew from beneath her dress a miniature. A beautiful, dark face was shown

there, the haughty poise of the head strangely contradicted by the pathetic droop of the corners of the full red lips. This had been sent her on her twentieth birthday, just before she left the convent. With it was a card on which was written: "Your mother at twenty. Pray for her." She had not dared show this to her father, but she had worn it constantly. Often she looked at it and wondered much what was the story of the girl whose face looked out at hers, and she prayed for her daily.

Then she thought of her journey and the letter which had caused it. Her father had brought it to her, saying, "Read this, little girl, and tell me how to answer it." She remembered seeing her Aunt Inez once, and the letter, so like her memory of her, had made her smile as she read it.

How quickly she had assured her father, with fond caresses, that she had never felt the lack of anything in her life and that she was happy just with him always. But he had seen the eager pleasure of her look in her first surprise, and the invitation had been accepted.

And now, here she was alone in Bitter Creek, when she should have been on the train for Ogden. How strange that she should have left the train! She had not thought of such a thing. 'Twas as if there had been a fatal fascination in the name, as the trainman spoke it, which drew her from the car. The remembrance of it frightened her and she gave a little shiver. There was a strain of superstition in her, an inheritance from Italian ancestors, and it clutched at her heart now with a whisper of impending evil that made her shrink with shortened breath.

The ringing of the supper gong broke the spell and she was ready to laugh at her fears as she descended the stairs. Still, she felt a little forlorn going all alone to her supper in this strange place, and the sight of John Gardner at the table was a relief and pleasure.

"O, I'm so glad you're here!" She exclaimed, "I'm lonesome!"

The speech was most ingenuous. Self-consciousness was not one of her

failings and she would have been vastly surprised could she have known the variety of emotions her words awakened in her companion.

She was eminently good to look at, he thought, as he met her frank glance, and it was nice to feel that she was ready to depend upon him. But her eyes met his too frankly and he would have been, somehow, better pleased had she been shyer in expressing her pleasure at seeing him again. Her manner was very charming though, and as far as possible from any boldness, and her voice was the sweetest he had ever heard. That made him think he would like to hear it again.

"Has the time hung so heavily on your hands already?" he said. "How will you ever manage till to-morrow afternoon?"

"I shall manage," she replied brightly, "but it is a bit eerie, you know, to be where you have no right to be and not even know why you're there. And even that wouldn't be so bad," she added, laughing, "if I had brought along my toothbrush and comb."

"I will take you up to our store, after supper, if you will let me," he replied. "I think I can safely promise you will find those most necessary articles in the stock, though it is always a question what you will find there."

They talked gayly all through the meal and every moment added to John Gardner's growing infatuation. Never before had he seen such a girl. Apparently she was an entire stranger to the delicate art of flirting. For all her freedom of manner, he did not dare to pay her a compliment. Then she could talk intelligently about all sorts of things girls generally know nothing about, and she was full of interest in the place she had come to so unexpectedly.

He wished that he knew more about it, for she was unusually pretty as she listened eagerly to the little he could tell. If only she would bestow a little of her interest on him, personally, and not so obviously all on what he had to say! He felt suddenly that he could never be happy till those wonderful violet eyes softened and drooped before his, acknowledging him master.

They walked to the store together, but she was not inclined to linger by the way, and left him promptly on their return to the hotel.

Her coming had caused a sensation in the little place. Her beauty and her city clothes made her appear like a different order of being and the rumor of her had spread rapidly. Half the population had made some excuse to visit the hotel to get a look at her. She was the last to perceive herself the object of all this lounging throng, but, when she did perceive it, she fled, in embarrassment, to the privacy of her room.

Grace slept soundly in spite of the strangeness of her surroundings, and woke to find the sun well up and shining brightly. She dressed herself quickly, wondering the while how she should pass the time till the arrival of the train at 5:27. The day looked so bright and inviting that she determined to take a tramp after breakfast, and she was just starting out as Gardner came down the stairs.

She had an unacknowledged dread of being alone in this strange place and an impulse came to her to ask him to go with her. She put it aside immediately, however. He was a gentleman, certainly, but he was also an utter stranger, and it would never do to ask him anything like that. So she gave him a bright good morning and went out of the hotel.

Once out of the house she wondered where she should go. There was nothing to the village itself that could not be seen from where she stood, and there were no roads leading invitingly out of it, as in the few country places she had seen in the East. Down in the canyon, the river, a silver thread, sparkled invitingly, and just ahead of her rose the tumbled mass of Table Rock Hill. She determined to climb the hill and see what sort of country chance had brought her into. Her summers had been spent in the Catskills and she was used to scrambles over rocks, and liked them. She found it harder climbing than she had expected, and when she reached the top she was tired and breathless and sat down to rest. She soon forgot her fatigue in her interest in the country spread out before her. Far, far below, the little

river wound and twisted its way between walls of rock. Near at hand the country showed hilly and broken. A little further off stretched a barren plain, and still further the Sweet Water Mountains rose grandly, and beyond them mountain peak after mountain peak, growing bluer and dimmer as far as the eye could reach.

A long time she sat there gazing out on this country she had never expected to see, wondering what drama was being played in such a setting. She had no share in this life here. She was but a spectator, she felt, waiting for the curtain to go up and the play to begin. What if among the actors she should see the face of her miniature? She was sure she should see it some day. What if it should be here, and now?

She drew the miniature from her bosom and sat looking at it, when she was startled by a touch on her shoulder. She jumped quickly to her feet and confronted a woman with a kind, anxious face, who was plainly dressed and had a shawl thrown about her and over her head as if she had come in haste.

"This is no place for you here, alone," she said. "Get back to the hotel as quickly as you can and leave the town as soon as possible." She spoke in a low, tense voice that made Grace's nerves quiver sympathetically, but her courage was good and she resolutely shook off the oppressing fear.

"Why, surely," she said, "this is not so bad a place that a girl may not walk out unattended in broad daylight!"

"Safe enough for others, but not safe for you, Grace De Costa!" the woman replied. "I've warned you; now go!"

"How do you know my name?" exclaimed Grace. "Who are you?"

The woman shook her head. "Go!" she said, and left her.

To be so addressed by name, in a strange place, and by a stranger, revived all the superstitious terrors of the preceding night, and Grace turned and hurriedly began her descent. In her excitement she forgot the miniature she held, till suddenly slipping, she put out her hand to save herself from falling, and dropped it. It fell

from rock to rock and finally came to rest on a projecting boulder. Grace stopped bewildered. What should she do? Terror urged her to make haste: sentiment pleaded for the recovery of the miniature. Sentiment won and she started down the precipitous side where it had fallen. Here she found the climbing still more difficult, but kept steadily on until she came to a place from which she thought the miniature could be reached. Balancing herself, she put out her hand to take it, but fright had rendered her ordinarily calm nerves unsteady; she failed to reach it at first, made a second hurried attempt, grasped it, and fell headlong down the rocky side of the hill. The formation of the hill prevented her falling far. Another projecting boulder with a shrub growing from it stopped and held her as the miniature had been held. For a moment she lay there gathering her strength, then attempted to rise. That, she found, was impossible, and with the effort a sickening pain in her leg told of a broken bone. All the terror she had felt sounded out in her despairing cry for help, and then she fainted.

Our scene must change now to London, England, and to one apartment in that vast city. 'Tis a handsome apartment, in an aristocratic quarter, and all the luxurious appointments speak of good taste and ample wealth. The rooms are lighted and there is a certain disorder about them that tells of the recent presence of a number of people. It would seem that the occupant of the apartment had been entertaining. It would seem too, from the expression on her face as she stands in front of her open fire, that she is pleased with her entertainment. She is a tall, graceful woman of about forty-five, though her figure is so youthful as to make her seem much younger. There is a certain impression of power about her, not altogether pleasant. There is something almost cruel in the triumphant expression on her face.

"He'll do it!" she murmurs softly, "He'll do it."

She is so absorbed that she does not hear the maid as she enters. She is

not aware of her presence till she has spoken her name twice.

"Mrs. Grant! if you please, Mrs. Grant!" There is an envelope on the salver the maid is holding.

"A cablegram!" Mrs. Grant exclaims, as she takes it. "Tell the boy to wait, Sarah, in case there's an answer."

The maid goes out softly and still the lady is loth to leave her happy revery. For a few minutes longer she dreams on with the pleased smile upon her lips. At last she tears the envelope open, and this is the message she reads:

"The time has come. De Costa."

She springs to her feet in a rage. "I will not!" she exclaims, as she paces the room angrily, "I will not! How like him!" she cries; and tearing the cablegram in pieces she tramples it under her feet. There is something feline in the grace of her angry movements.

"The time has come, the walrus said!" she quotes with a bitter laugh. "And to the end of time the poor little oysters will go to be eaten," with an impatient shrug. But just now——"

Her raging walk has brought her to her desk and she sits down to it almost mechanically. A moment later the maid answers the bell.

"Give this to the boy, and you need not sit up, Sarah; I've several things to do before going to bed."

The paper she hands her is addressed,

"Ferdinand De Costa,

"19———St.,

"N. Y., U. S. A."

and the message it bears is, "I'll not forget."

CHAPTER III.

When Grace De Costa left the hotel and made her way toward Table Rock, Gardner watched her from the front window of the hotel office, locally known as the "bar", in silent dismay. He had spent the major portion of yesterday pursuing his investigations over a tract of promising land, or rather rocks, that lay some distance beyond Table Rock proper. This spot could be reached only by the path she had chosen or by descending into the canyon and following it up the bank of Bitter Creek, where there was any

bank,—in many places the way being seemingly blocked to even one of Gardner's athletic build by the steep walls of the canyon.

At one spot there was a shifting mass of finely disintegrated rock, which sloped from midway up the wall of the canyon to the water's edge, and which he had discovered possessed a peculiar property of seeming to become endowed with life and motion as soon as touched by the foot or hand of man, or for that matter anything of sufficient weight to produce motion. This shifting bank had been visited several times by Gardner and each time with increasing interest and wonder, because of certain phenomena and sensations which he had noticed the first time he followed up the bed of the canyon, and with which we will deal later.

After hastily running over in his mind the plans he had made for the day, without, however, consulting this beautiful and bewitching stranger, he resolved to carry them out with two amendments. He would take the difficult and devious route up the canyon instead of the direct and easier way over Table Rock, and take up his investigations where he had left off the night before. He would, however, make sure to return to the hotel in ample time to enable him to see Miss De Costa and have a talk with her before the 5:27 express arrived and carried away what had in these few hours become an extremely interesting personality to him; and he then and there resolved to have important business in Ogden at a very early date.

As a vision of loveliness and grace—clad, however, owing to unavoidable circumstances, in a tailor-made traveling gown, Knox hat, patent leather oxfords, and open-work silken hose, instead of short skirt and mountain shoes,—disappeared behind a big boulder at a curve in the path, Gardner left the hotel office, ascended to his room, three steps at a bound, unlocked an immense steel-bound trunk, seized a copper flask made in curving form to fit the inside pocket of his coat, and then filled the flask not with a stimulant, but with acids from the carboy which was safely and securely fitted into one end of the trunk. He

then started hurriedly toward the door and had just crossed the threshold when he stopped and in evident indecision seemed to ponder for a moment.

"By jove, it seems foolish," he said to himself, audibly. "it seems foolish, but I am going to take it," and he returned to his trunk, unlocked it and drew out a belt and holster containing a heavy, business-like looking modern six shooter, which he buckled on under his coat. Then taking a light fly rod and a trout basket he descended the stairs to the hall where he encountered Mrs. Lynch, the landlady.

"A fine mornin', Mr. Gardner," said she. "Our stranger is goin' to tackle Table Rock. I reckon them shiny shoes'll be barked some afore she gits back: and if she don't have stun-bruises fer some one to do up in arnicy, it'll be a wonder."

Gardner smiled in a pre-occupied way and almost regretted, on the strength of her apprehensions, that he had not studied medicine and taken an M. D. instead of an M. E. as he had once nearly decided to do.

"Never mind," said he to himself, "If I can only some day put in an 'I' and an 'N.'" Then telling Mrs. Lynch that he was going up the canyon to try the trout but should be back in time to accompany Miss De Costa to the train, he started down a little trail which led by devious windings to the bottom of the canyon, and made his way up stream.

While Gardner and Mrs. Lynch stood on the porch by the front door, the fisherman who sat on the rock the night before and was seemingly stunned as if by an apparition, at the sight of Grace De Costa, came across the bridge, up the street and entered the bar-room by a side door. Stepping up to the bar he ordered a drink which he poured out from a bottle bearing the legend, "V. O. P. Scotch," and drowning it in water before drinking it as the bar-keeper afterwards declared, he lighted a cigar and strolled slowly over to the opposite side of the room to a table on which lay the hotel register, an ancient looking, much thumbbed and soiled and fly-specked specimen of the bookbinder's art. Had there been anyone in the room interested enough to

watch him, they would have seen that he was under intense mental and nervous strain.

"God", he muttered under his breath, "I dare not look. I may have been mistaken, but I cannot believe it, for that was her face, her hair, her eyes, her form, and if this book bears the name, 'the die is cast' and I must act and act quickly, or all hope is gone, for fate will never again put things within my reach."

As this flashed through his mind he steeled himself, and crushing his lips between his teeth until they bled, he turned the leaves of the register to the date of the preceding day and saw at a glance, as if cut in relief, so clearly and boldly for a feminine hand were they written, the words "Grace De Costa, N. Y."

Closing the book with a swift movement he turned and left the room, walked rapidly down the street, across the bridge and soon disappeared around the same impartial old boulder which had so recently shielded Grace De Costa's fair form. Swiftly he moved along, almost as if in a dream, avoiding instinctively the various obstructions which bestrewed the path, leaping from rock to rock, across cracks and fissures, skirting narrow little ledges, moving swiftly across smooth stretches of rock, level as a floor, where there was absolutely no trail to indicate that a human foot had pressed it in a year. Winding seemingly in a hap-hazard way, now to the right, now to the left, never stopping but hurrying onward, with feverish haste, had you or I seen him at this time we would have sworn that he never looked where he stepped and that he gazed straight ahead with fixed eyes, guided by some mysterious force and muttering to himself almost the words that Grace De Costa had uttered, "Is it hypnotism?", he followed unconsciously step by step the way over which she had so recently passed.

"Courage" he muttered, "courage, and who knows but that I may yet set all right?"

Gardner made his way up Bitter Creek canyon that bright sunny morning in a mood which was new to him. Ordinarily the world moved smoothly for him and his cares were few. Pos-

sessed of good health, a fine physique, a strong and genial temperament, a technical education in his chosen calling, backed by a university training, enthusiastic over and successful in his work, and with financial resources above the average, he had never known the real meaning of worry or disappointment, or experienced a reasonable want that he could not satisfy. But a new leaf had been inserted in his book of life within the last twenty-four hours and he was just beginning to realize that it was the most interesting leaf in the book and that no matter which way his thoughts turned they inevitably returned to and rested upon this one leaf, which dealt entirely with a young woman whom he was at present, solely for the sake of conventionality, engaged in avoiding.

"Never mind," he said to himself, "I shall be back in New York, D. V., just about as soon as she is, and then under the circumstances, I will have a license to call on the banker's daughter and receive his glad hand for 'favors done'; and then it will be 'up to me.' In the meantime work is work and from now to 3 o'clock Karlum has the field and then I will be on hand at the 5:27 and ask her if I may call should I happen to be in Ogden."

While engaged in this reverie and a thousand other subtle and shadowy ones, too tender and sacred to put on record for the cold gaze of a Winter Evening Club, Gardner had made good progress and reached that part of the canyon which was becoming of more and more interest to him because of the mysterious forces which were concealed somewhere in the immediate vicinity. He was devoting his time to the study of this phenomenon of the moving rock, with the view of determining not only its chemical composition, but its origin, for on close inspection and examination, he had discovered what, so far as he knew, no one else was aware of,—and that was that this mass of disintegrated rock was actually forced out of the face of the canyon by some as yet unknown force and under most mysterious conditions.

Upon first visiting the deposit and

becoming impressed with it, he made, one bright and extremely clear day, exhaustive notes and measurements. He then went away and did not return for two days. When he did go back it happened to be on a dull, cloudy day, and to his deep amazement, he found that the dimensions of the deposit had decreased to a marked degree. He was so impressed by this that he made daily inspections and memoranda, with the result that he established the theory that the deposit was affected by heat, moisture, and light in a manner that plainly denoted it to be no common stone. He also verified by measurements the fact that the deposit was steadily but almost imperceptibly forced or exuded from the face of the rock during the time that the sun was shining clearly, but that at night in particular, and on cloudy days to a lesser degree, there was a marked waste or shrinkage of the visible amount.

To one of his profession this was of course deeply interesting and naturally his first thought was "what if Karlium accounted for this, or rather this accounted for Karlium?" When near the spot where the deposit outcropped from the ledge he had experienced peculiar sensations in the throat, chest, and head, which he had often noticed in the laboratory while experimenting on Karlium with Professor Raymond. This had set him to thinking that it would be well to test the face of the cliff thoroughly at the various strata, and on the top of a wide shelving ledge just above the seam where the deposit seemed to originate; and it was for this purpose that he had filled and brought the copper flask of acids. He now endeavored to climb directly up to the ledge above, in order to make a test, but he found it impracticable owing to the abruptness and height, so he cast about for a feasible route.

As he stood looking first down and then up the canyon, he found himself wondering which way he had best go; and then to his confusion and wonder he realized in a flash that some mysterious force held him as if bound and that there seemed to be a terrible re-

sponsibility thrown on him in deciding whether he should go down or up the stream. At this moment there flashed into his mind the words of Grace De Costa, "My consciousness was an absolute blank," and before he realized why or how he found himself moving rapidly up the canyon; and could you have seen his eyes you would have seen that they seemed to be fixed in his head, staring straight ahead like those of the fisherman.

The fisherman was at the same time making his way over Table Rock rapidly, step by step drawing nearer and nearer to the point towards which Gardner was also making; and each unconsciously drawing nearer to Grace De Costa. As the fisherman advanced over the rough and rocky way he constantly muttered to himself disjointed phrases in which were blended the names of Corona, Ferdinand De Costa, Marie, London, Cannes. As he ascended a steep declivity where the path turned abruptly and came out near the edge of the canyon, he suddenly came face to face with the woman who had warned Grace.

"Jane! he exclaimed, "what are you doing here? Why did you leave the house?"

"Oh, Richard," she said, "how you startled me! I had finished my morning's work and as you did not come back, I thought I would have time to take a tramp over Table Rock; but why are you here this morning, Richard?"

"Oh, for no particular reason," said he, "in fact I don't know why, Jane. I went to the hotel this morning and examined the register, and it was Ferdinand De Costa's daughter that I saw cross the bridge with that young prospector last night. Now we must have an understanding here and now. Neither you nor I dreamed that she would cross our path in this out-of-the-way place. I want to tell you that I am prepared to risk all by seeing Grace De Costa to-day, if possible, and—talking with her."

"Richard!" she exclaimed breathlessly, "you must not, you shall not do this!"

"Jane! I have decided and nothing

shall deter me. It is now life or death with me, and nothing shall stop me."

"If nothing else will bring you to your senses," said she, "I may as well tell you that I saw Grace De Costa not ten minutes ago and warned her to return to the hotel and see no one before leaving the town to-night."

As the woman uttered these words the fisherman seemed to turn to stone. Then with a furious expression on his countenance, he said:

"You have spoiled all and shall suffer the consequences," and whipping out a revolver, he fired a shot which was heard by Gardner as he ascended the canyon, while almost at the same instant, Gardner heard a piercing cry for help from down the canyon in a voice which he knew only too well to be Grace De Costa's.

Turning quickly he rushed down the canyon at breakneck speed, jumping from rock to rock, now in the water, now on the bank, dashing over places and up and down ledges, which he laboriously climbed on his way up, and in a few minutes reached the bank of moving rock at the base of which lay the form of Grace De Costa, white and motionless, blood trickling from a wound on her temple, one leg twisted under her in a way to indicate that it was broken, and under her right hand what Gardner thought to be a miniature of her own face. Kneeling beside her he raised her in his arms and in a voice as tender as a mother's, said:

"Grace! Oh, Grace, my love, speak to me! speak just once that I may know you live."

At first there was no response, and a terrible fear almost overpowered him. He lifted her eyelids and to him the eyes seemed set. He then attempted to pry her lips apart and pour some whiskey into her mouth from a small flask he carried, but her tongue seemed to cleave to her throat. He had never seen anyone in a dead faint before, and for a few frightful moments he believed she was dead. Suddenly her eyelids fluttered, she gasped and finally opening her eyes she gazed blankly into his face, and said:

"Someone called me—called—Grace. Was it you?"

Gardner's throat clutched and his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, but he finally said, almost in a sob:

"Yes, thank God, I did call you, Grace."

CHAPTER IV.

When good Mrs. Lynch (whose husband was an engineer on the Union Pacific and seldom at home) first opened the doors of "The Great Western Hotel" to the public, she had, through pity, taken into her service, as well as her big Irish heart, a woman who had drifted into the small town like a storm-driven wreck.

Her past was to all a sealed book, but she repaid Mrs. Lynch's kindness with untiring devotion; and the sight of a child would bring such a look of longing into her face,—such pathetic eagerness to clasp the small creature to her breast—that all women, and some men, could readily see that the spark of motherhood had been kindled and still burned fiercely in her heart.

"New England" was written on every feature of the rugged face, shone in the sad brown eyes, and dropped from her tongue with every sentence, so that she seemed like a being from another world to the Western people among whom she was thrown. Always ready to be of service to any and all, with a wealth of love brightening the plain but expressive features, she may have been a greater saint than many whose histories have come down to us through the ages, whose pictures are famous throughout the world.

On the night when John Gardner and Grace De Costa, so strangely thrown together, were taking their supper at the hotel, it fell to Phoebe—not by chance, but by the mysterious workings of what we blind mortals call Fate—to wait upon them. Grace's delicate beauty and air of high breeding, her gentle manner of speaking when thanking Phoebe for her services, had so impressed and worked upon the feelings of this poorer, unfortunate sister, that she lived and breathed (to quote her own words) "like somebody treadin' on air."

After the evening's work was done,

the other servants asleep or amusing themselves in various ways, she sat, as she often did, with the weary but ever watchful Mrs. Lynch on the kitchen piazza. For a time thought held her in its embrace, then she remarked to her companion:

"Say Miss Lynch, did you notice that handsome creeter with Mr. Gardner at supper to-night? Get down Bose!" (this to the fat, lubberly puppy, who was trying to pull Nugget, the yellow kitten, out of her lap and insinuate his own ungainly body into the coveted spot). "Why she looks just like a tall white lily—one of them kind that my mother always had in her garden in summer, way up there in the White Mountains. Seems as if you must take hold of her, and if you did, she would droop and die. I couldn't keep my eyes off from her and it seems just as if I'd seen her somewhere before—but of course I never did. I hope I shall have a chance to touch her somehow, if only to kiss those pretty white hands, for it seems as if it would kinder ease the ache in my heart and bring me nearer to my pretty lamb layin' by my mother's side in the graveyard in Bartlett.

"You've been awful good to me, Miss Lynch, takin' me in when I come along here a stranger, with no money, (for it was all stole from me when my satchel was taken on the cars) nursin' me through that sickness and givin' me work when I got well, without askin' me any questions, but I appreciate it and to-night it's borne in on me to tell you my story.

"My father died when I was too young to remember him, but he left a little farm for my mother and me (I was an only child) up in Bartlett, N. H., and by working hard after I got old enough to help her, and selling farm truck and savin', we managed to get along comfortably and be happy. I can see the grand old White Mountains now as I had from the time I could take notice, and I always loved 'em in sunshine and storm. That's one reason why I'm more contented to stay here than anywhere else, because it reminds me in a way of home.

"As I grew older, I kited round a good deal with the boys and girls to

quiltin' parties, apple bees and rides, and if I do say it, I had my share of beaux, but I was a high-headed thing, and from seein' and talkin' with the city boarders that would stop at our house on their walks or drives for a drink of milk or a taste of mother's cookin', I got the idea that none of them plain, good farmer boys was my style. I must have a city feller for my husband."

Phoebe paused and the sad face grew sadder. "Well! I got him and for about a year was happy, tho' mother always kinder distrusted William—his name was William Elkins and he was a drummer,—said he was too slick and smooth; wasn't willin' either to talk about his folks or let me visit 'em, or have any of 'em come to see us. But I was livin' in a fool's Paradise and wouldn't listen to a word. When my baby girl was born I was so awfully happy that I actually pitied Queen Victoria or any woman, rich or poor, that didn't have a baby like mine."

Quietly Mrs. Lynch, during the recital of the story, had taken hold of a hand of the other woman, clasping it close, as if to guard and protect her from the sorrow that was coming. The light of the moon fell on the little group, giving them a touch of unearthly beauty, because it showed in the face of each woman the holy attributes of love and sympathy.

"Well, Miss Lynch, I'm most through. Before my baby was named, God took her home to his own tender arms. Then mother went, and before I had got over the numb, awful feelin' that almost froze my heart, I found out that William, my husband, had a wife and two children livin' in New York. Then I was glad my mother and baby had gone home together.

"For a while, I was pretty near crazy, but I had good friends and they helped me to sell the old home ('twant worth very much) and I started for New York to fight for what I thought was my rights—but I hadn't any and Oh! my, I tell you I pitied that other poor deceived wife, and those pretty children. She was good to me, but I couldn't bear to see her (William had

disappeared) and think of what I was, so I started in to work at one thing and another until finally I got settled down in one of the big highfalutin' hotels as head chamber-maid.

"One day while I was cleanin' up the bathroom of some rooms that was occupied for a few days by two fine tho' sad lookin' women, I heard one mournin' over the loss of their maid, who had cleared out without givin' much warnin'. I was handy with my needle, could dress hair, pack trunks, never got tired, and could hold my tongue, and as there was nothin' to keep me in this country (I forgot to say they were going to Europe in a few days) I just walked right out and asked 'em to try me. They had seen me and known me long enough to have some faith in me, so they hired me on the spot, and we all sailed for France on the next steamer.

"I stood the voyage well, for in spite of my awful troubles, I had kept well and healthy, and it was a pleasure to wait on such beautiful women as they were. They were grand and high, but always sweet and gentle to me. One night just before we left the steamer at Cherbourg, I saw the daughter looking at an open locket she always had hung around her neck, on a gold chain, and all of a sudden she throws herself into her mother's arms cryin', 'Oh, Mother, if I could only see my precious girlie again, my own baby, I should be glad to die!' 'Corona', says her mother, 'be patient, and I firmly believe your child will be given back to you. Have you waited all these years to give up now? Pray to God, dear child, to endure until He sees fit to right your wrongs and punish the man whom nothing seems to touch that can hurt in body or soul, if he has one.'

"Mrs. Von Post was a widow, but I suppose poor Miss Corona, as she called herself, had a good-for-nothin' husband somewhere, but I never asked no questions. They always kept by themselves, never mixin' with others and seemed to have plenty of money.

"The strangest thing was that in all those years I was with 'em, we never set foot in England—lived mostly in

France, Italy, and Germany among them gibberin' monkeys that can't either cook or talk. In the summer we would go into the mountains of Switzerland, and what with so much change in my life, and the lovin' kindness of my two dear mistresses, peace begun to find its way into my heart again.

"But after we had been gone five or six years, I felt as if I must go back to my old home, if only to lay my head on my dear ones' graves and rest for a little while. Mrs. Von Post and Miss Corona hated to give me up, but they did. We were in Rome then, and I had been feeling mean and queer for two or three weeks. I remember the trip on the steamer to New York, then some way gettin' onto a train that landed me here, sick with that awful fever, and that's the last I knew until I see your good, motherly face bendin' over me, and heard the Doctor say, 'She will pull through all right now, Mrs. Lynch.'

"Ain't it strange? There I was aimin' for Bartlett, N. H., and the scene of all my misery and shame, and the Lord just took a hand in it and dumped me down onto you? I tell you, Miss Lynch, I want to do somethin' now to help somebody as I have been helped, just to show my gratitude to God and to let Him see that I don't bear any hard feelin's even towards William, although he is a scallawag. I suppose women are fools and will cling to the love that's put into their hearts for men, no matter if they're reg'lar Mormons."

The moonlight touched the woman's face, bringing out the strong characteristics of great love, long suffering borne patiently and uncomplainingly; desire to serve her fellow creatures in joy or sorrow. Turned the tears glistening on her listener's face into pure pearls; lay softly on the sleeping cat and dog, changing them into statues of peace, beyond the power of jealousy and warfare which made their waking hours so exciting and, I grieve to admit, enticing to both.

The pines murmured softly, and the waters of Bitter Creek sang a song of peace to the weary-hearted; of joy

to those who as yet had not touched hands with pain or sorrow. While over and above all, the angels of life and death looked down through the shining pathway of the stars, with blessings in their hands for all whom they might visit. For if we can only see aright, life is but the beginning of death, and death the dawning of life, a blessing to those who can realize its beauty.

The two women sat still for a time, Mrs. Lynch's motherly heart so filled with pity and sympathy for her companion that words failed even her voluble Irish tongue.

Finally Phoebe arose, still holding the sleeping puss, and remarked, "Nugget and I are going to bed for I feel as if there was a heap of work ahead of us to-morrow, and there's a creepy, crawly feelin' over me too about those two young things that looked and acted so happy to-night; somethin' that tells me I've got to help 'em through a sight of trouble. There! I guess I'm moon-struck but I suppose my own tribulations has put me on the lookout for other folks. Good night, you dear, good soul; don't worry, for I guess you and I together can tackle anything that's comin',—and lay it, too."

The generous-hearted landlady had one source of anxiety in the shape of a rollicking, lazy, happy-go-lucky son named Tim, who, when not entertaining the guests in the bar of the hotel with his quaint humor, and ready wit, the inheritance of a long line of Irish ancestors, was drinking deeply and earnestly with congenial souls at a saloon farther down and across the street, named by its owner and proprietor in a moment of drunken but poetical ardor, "The Blush Rose".

Sounds of song and laughter floated on the night air to the ears of the tired mother, as she made her preparations for closing the house, and seeking her much needed rest and made her wish audibly that the elder Tim could leave "that devil of an engine" and look after the boy.

Little did she or Phoebe dream, as they slept, of the work that was soon coming to them, of the events that even then were taking shape, and

would culminate in less than twenty-four hours.

CHAPTER V.

The man stood with the smoking revolver clutched tightly in his hand. Slowly the frenzy faded from his eyes. He lifted his arm uncertainly, waveringly, and passed his hand across his brow. His face, a moment before convulsed with passion, partially regained its composure. He glanced at the still smoking weapon in a dazed way and then at the woman by his side. Gradually, in his passion-clouded brain, the events of the preceding moments took definite form; the color faded from his face, leaving it a livid, ghastly white.

"My God, Jane! what have I done?" he cried in a voice choking with sobs.

The woman stepped to his side and put her hand lovingly on his shoulder.

"Richard, dear, my poor Richard," she said, tenderly, "come home with me, you are not yourself this morning—do come," and she looked into his face with pleading eyes.

The woman's presence of mind alone had saved her from death. She had seen it coming and with the ready adaptation to circumstances born of her life of struggle, she had met and averted it. A sense of duty, always the unconscious though compelling force in her decisions, had abetted her in her determination to warn Grace De Costa at all costs. It had also been the moving motive in her confession to Richard. She had fully expected his anger and was prepared to meet it; but at the sight of his face, convulsed with passion, his trembling form, his blazing eyes, she had almost lost her self-control. One thing alone prevented it,—that unconscious adaptation to surroundings which we call the instinct of self-preservation.

She had made her confession with some misgivings, but was in no wise prepared for the paroxysm of rage which it called forth. Her expression of amazement had given place to one of horror as she saw his hand pass rapidly to his pocket. With swift intuition she had divined his purpose, taken one step forward and struck his arm a sharp upward blow with her clenched

fist, causing the weapon to discharge itself harmlessly in the air.

The man Richard at length recovered his composure sufficiently to listen to the woman's pleading and was allowing her to lead him slowly in the direction of the house at the foot of Table Rock Hill, when Grace De Costa's cry of distress reached their ears. With a sudden movement he wrenched himself loose from the woman and rushed at breakneck speed in the direction from which the sound came. She called to him but, as he paid no heed to her cries, started to follow him. The events of the morning, however, had placed too great a strain upon her overwrought nerves and after a few steps, she grew dizzy, the rocks and bushes seemed to whirl round and round before her eyes, then everything grew black and with a moan of distress she sank to the ground.

Richard quickly reached the edge of the canyon and was hesitating in which direction to turn when he heard Gardner's voice. He stepped forward and peered over the edge. The canyon was about ten feet deep at this place. Directly below him he beheld Gardner bending over the inanimate form of a woman, which he immediately recognized as that of Grace De Costa. He quickly drew back for fear of discovery and waited to recover his breath. After somewhat regaining his composure, he concluded to have another look and crept stealthily to the edge just in time to see Gardner rise and glance anxiously up and down the canyon as though seeking aid, but he restrained himself.

"No, it will not do," he thought. "I must see her alone. There is too much at stake."

At length Gardner, in despair of receiving any assistance, and realizing that something must be done, and that immediately, knelt down and raising Grace De Costa tenderly in his arms, in another moment had disappeared with his precious burden round a bend in the canyon in the direction of "The Great Western Hotel."

Quickly rising, Richard was about to retrace his steps in the direction in which he had come, when something caught his eye at the bottom of the canyon near the spot where he had beheld the form of Grace De Costa lying.

He climbed quickly down and picked up the object which had attracted his attention. It was a miniature attached to a delicate gold chain and containing the portrait of a beautiful girl. The man gazed at the beautiful face framed in its mass of dark wavy hair, and, as he gazed, the hard lines in his face softened, the cynical, reckless, devil-may-care look faded from his eyes, an expression of mingled tenderness and longing came into his face, the disfiguring marks wrought by care and trouble seemed to disappear, as though smothered away by love's gentle touch, transforming his rugged face for the instant into the semblance of beauty. It was only for an instant, however. Gradually, the cold, hard, cynical expression returned.

"Bah! Am I a sickly sentimentalist to be unnerved by the sight of a woman's face?" he said bitterly. "No! I think I will make no further attempt to see Ferdinand De Costa's daughter," he continued, and then, musingly, as his glance fell again on the miniature which he held in his hand, "I wonder what the nature of Ferdinand De Costa's remarks would be if he knew that I had this trinket in my possession. I believe it would be worth a trip to New York to find out," he continued. "Yes," he said, addressing the miniature, "I believe I will keep you snug and close for a time at least," and thrusting it into his pocket he stalked off in the direction of the house at the foot of Table Rock Hill.

A week had elapsed since the events just narrated and the "mise en scene" no longer discloses the sylvan solitude of Bitter Creek but the cosmopolitan bustle of Greater New York, or, to be exact, an eminently aristocratic mansion in an eminently aristocratic quarter of that thriving city. Within all is silent confusion, the servants tiptoe about, gather in hushed groups, with pale faces, and speak in awed whispers. A terrible thing had happened. The master, Ferdinand De Costa, had been found that morning lying dead on the floor of his study, murdered, it is said by some, a suicide, it is whispered by others. The police and the coroner had been notified and after some delay the coroner arrived, a bustling, nervous, self-important little man, with the air

of one thoroughly knowing his duty and a determination to perform that duty without unnecessary delay. After being ushered, or rather ushering himself, into the room where the crime, if crime it was, had been committed, he glanced hastily about, and then, seating himself at a desk, scribbled a note and handed it to an assistant with instructions to deliver it immediately. The man glanced at the address and hastened away. While waiting for a reply he busied himself in an examination of the body of the unfortunate man.

It was lying at full length in the center of the room, face down, in the same position as when discovered at seven o'clock that morning by the butler. Near the body and to the right lay a revolver. The coroner picked this up, saw that one chamber contained an empty shell, and placed it on the table. He then bent down and continued the examination. A wound similar to that made by a pistol ball was discovered just below the right temple and he noted that the flesh appeared to be badly burned about the edges as though the pistol had been held close to the head when it was discharged. A further examination disclosed a spot on the skin at the nape of the neck and just above the collar. This spot was of a peculiar greenish tinge, was about half the size of a ten-cent piece, and directly in the center was what appeared to be an almost microscopic pin prick. He shook his head in some perplexity and gently turned the body over, disclosing the face to view. Beyond the usual signs which betoken a violent death, he observed nothing unusual, except that the jaws were set as though in a vise and defied all attempt to force them apart.

Having finished his examination, the coroner summoned his assistants, who gently raised the body, bore it to a lounge and carefully covered it with a sheet. Hardly was this gruesome task accomplished when the messenger returned, accompanied by a weazened, insignificant looking little man with a small head, an unusually prominent hooked nose, and little sharp bead-like eyes that glanced restlessly hither and thither without appearing to rest on any object for more than a fraction of a second. When their owner did deign,

however, to let his glance meet yours, it went through you—as one of his associates expressed it—"like a gimlet through a sixteenth-of-an-inch board."

This was Grigson, or, as his Pinkerton associates dubbed him, Hank Grigson, the cunningest, coolest, shrewdest detective in the city of New York.

"Ah! Good morning, Grigson," said the coroner somewhat effusively "I sent for you from motives of precaution rather than because I believe we have here a case for you to exercise your talents upon." Then in a lower tone, "It's a clear case of suicide, but you know in these days of yellow journalism it won't do to neglect going through the usual formula."

The detective made no response but glanced rapidly about the small room in which he found himself, the little ferret-like eyes taking in every detail on the instant.

"Have you examined the servants?" he asked quietly, turning toward his voluble associate.

"No," was the reply. "It is hardly worth while I think. It is so clearly a case of ——"

"May I see the body?" interrupted the detective.

"Certainly, step this way."

The coroner carefully raised the sheet and the detective bent over and keenly scrutinized the features of the dead man's face, while his associate volubly directed his attention to the wound in the temple, and, with somewhat less stress, to the set jaws and the peculiar spot on the back of the neck, and then turned to speak to an assistant who stood near.

Grigson, who had been examining this spot with apparent interest, seized the opportunity when the coroner's back was turned toward him, quickly turned the body, bent still closer and peered into the dead man's eyes.

"Ha, I thought so," he said under his breath.

Hardly was this accomplished when Coroner Wilkinson rejoined him, and placing his hand familiarly on his shoulder, said:

"Well, am I not right in my surmise? Come, admit that this is not a case requiring your services. I know it is dis-

appointing but I have unmistakable evidence that the wound which caused the death of Ferdinand De Costa was self-inflicted."

A faint smile flickered for a second on Grigson's lips.

"What is your unmistakable evidence?" he questioned.

"This," replied the coroner, handing the revolver, with a triumphant air to the detective.

Grigson took the proffered weapon, looked into the barrel, carefully removed the empty cartridge from its chamber, and as carefully replaced it. Then he said:

"Have you probed for the bullet?"

"No," was the reply, "it seemed a useless waste of time."

"You are quite right, it would have been a waste of time. I do not think you could have found it."

"What!" exclaimed the coroner, "are you casting slurs on my professional ability?"

"Not at all," was the answer. "You could not have found the bullet simply because there is no bullet there to find. At least," the speaker added, "no bullet has been fired from this pistol since it was last cleaned. Let me prove this to you," he said, in answer to the coroner's look of incredulity, and drawing a handkerchief from his pocket he forced one end of it, with the aid of a pencil, into the barrel, and then withdrew it. The handkerchief remained as spotless as before.

He next removed the revolving chamber, again forced the handkerchief into the aperture containing the empty cartridge shell and withdrew it as before. As he did so a cry of surprise almost escaped his lips, for this time a black, sooty stain marred its whiteness. He gazed at the handkerchief for a moment in bewilderment, raised it to his nostrils, took a strong whiff, glanced rapidly about the room, observing in doing so the amused and somewhat triumphant expression on the coroner's visage, arose and walked to the table at which the coroner had sat while writing the note, and appeared to be examining the various objects it contained, although it would have been impossible for an observer to de-

termine which particular object attracted his attention. He seemed satisfied, however, and turning to the coroner, said jokingly:

"Well, Wilkinson, I do not flatter myself that my little demonstration has proved as convincing to one of your obtuse intellect as I had hoped. The revolver barrel is certainly clean, but as for the chamber—however, that matter will wait. If you have no objection I think I would like to examine the servants."

The butler was called, and upon being questioned the following information was elicited: He had been in the employ of Mr. De Costa for the last four years. His employer had returned from his office last night at the usual hour, had eaten his dinner and had retired to his study after requesting him to light a fire in the fireplace, as the night was somewhat chilly. He did so and was about to retire for the night, as his master rarely had visitors and always let them in and out himself when such an event occurred. As he was passing through the hall, he was surprised to hear the door bell ring. He immediately stepped to the door, opened it, and ushered in a man who asked to see Mr. De Costa. Had he observed the man's appearance? Yes, he was about fifty-five years of age, of medium height, with a rugged face, somewhat tanned from exposure to the weather, evidently from his manner a gentleman, and appeared to be laboring under some excitement. He had conducted this man to the door of Mr. De Costa's study, had knocked, and then, not wishing to intrude, had silently withdrawn. He was on his way up-stairs when he recollected that he had failed to perform a certain duty which could not wait until morning, and had descended to the kitchen. He remained there for perhaps fifteen minutes and was returning, when he was again startled by another ring at the door. This visitor proved to be a woman who likewise asked for Mr. De Costa. He could give no description of her beyond the fact that she was tall, youthful in figure, and heavily veiled. He had informed her that Mr. De Costa was busy, but she had insist-

ed that she must see him at once, that he expected her, and that she would take all the blame for disturbing him upon herself. He had then left the woman seated in the hall, had gone to the study door and knocked. Mr. De Costa had opened it, and he had informed him of the woman's presence. Upon receiving this information, Mr. De Costa had appeared somewhat agitated, but after saying a few words in an undertone to his first visitor requested him to show the lady in. He had done so and had then retired for the night.

Up to this point the butler had been allowed to tell his own story. Grigson had listened intently and now said:

"That will do, Thomas, for the present so far as your story is concerned, but I would like to ask you a few questions which may or may not throw some light on this unhappy affair. I trust you will answer them truthfully and to the best of your ability. Was Mr. De Costa's male visitor in the room at the time you showed this woman in?"

"I do not know sir. I did not go beyond the door."

"It would have been possible for him to remain concealed in that closet or to pass out of the house by that door leading onto the side porch, would it not?"

"Yes, sir."

"I observe that both doors are locked at present. Where were the keys kept?"

"They always hang on that nail by the closet door, sir—why, sir, they have gone now. I don't know what can have become of them,—they haven't been off that nail, except when in use, to my knowledge, since I've been here, sir."

"I want to ask you two more questions, and then I will trouble you no further," said the detective. "First, was your master in the habit of reading by lamplight?"

"No, sir, that lamp which you see on the table was always kept cleaned and filled in case the electric light should fail which it sometimes did owing to poor wiring, sir, but Mr. De Costa

never used it, he always used the electric drop-light."

"And now for the last question: I observe a very handsome pair of tongs and a poker of the same pattern standing by the fireplace; are they for use or merely for ornament?"

"Oh, merely for ornament, sir. Mr. De Costa was very choice of them. They are heirlooms; I always brought in a poker to stir the fire and carried it away with me when I went."

"That will do, Thomas, thank you," said Grigson, and the butler started to leave. He had reached the door when he heard the coroner's voice calling to him.

"I have a question I would like to ask you, Thomas.

"Very well, sir."

"Did Mr. De Costa own a revolver?"

"He did, sir."

"Is this it?"

"It looks like it, sir."

"Can't you state positively?"

"Well, all I can say is one day this week when I was putting things to rights in the study I came across a revolver in a drawer in that table. It was rusty and I cleaned it, reloaded it as I had found it, and put it back. That looks like the one, sir."

"You say you put it back in a drawer in this table;—what drawer?"

"The one that is open now, sir."

"Was that drawer open when you discovered Mr. De Costa's body this morning?" The butler hesitated.

"I can't say positively, but I think it was, sir."

"That will do," and the butler vanished from the room.

The housekeeper was next called. A true daughter of Erin with a broad Irish face stepped into the room and without waiting to be asked began her story, given in a rich, creamy brogue, and now and then interspersed with such exclamations as "Sure, I never was so upset in me loife," and "Poor Mish-ter De Costa, shure a foiner gintleman never drew the breath of loife." During her recital, she held something clasped tightly in her fingers. As she paused for breath Grigson leaned forward and said:

"What have you got in your hand?"

"Shure, yer honor, I was just comin' to that. This was the way of it. I was upstairs in the Mashter's room—shure a foiner gintleman niver was—doin' the dustin' this mornin', when I be-thought me to get a breath of fresh air, so I goes to the windy and looks out and there on the ground I spies this picture, shure I never seen the loikes of it before," and she handed Grigson a miniature on a gold chain. It was the picture of a beautiful dark girl. As the detective gazed upon it with the eye of a trained reader of character, he noted with interest that the haughty poise of the head was strangely contradicted by the pathetic droop of the corners of the full red lips.

The remaining servants were examined one by one but they could throw no further light on the case, as they had all retired before the first visitor made his appearance.

At length Grigson and the coroner became the sole remaining occupants of the room. The detective walked to the fireplace and examined the tongs and poker to which he had called the butler's attention. He was about to thrust the poker into the dead ashes of the fire when he remembered the statement that it was for ornament, not use, and he substituted a small stick of kindling. Having accomplished his purpose he crossed the room to where the coroner sat writing at the desk.

"Well, Wilkinson, I suppose you have made up your mind by this time what it is, murder or suicide."

"I see no reason for changing my opinion as already expressed," was the reply.

"My dear Wilkinson, you are not only doggedly obstinate but you are likewise strangely obtuse."

"Many thanks, Mr. Grigson, for your complimentary observation," replied the coroner testily, "but it strikes me that the obstinacy is on the other side. If De Costa did not come to his death by the aid of a bullet how do you account for the wound in the temple and if the bullet was not fired from the revolver found at his side, how do you explain the outcome of your clever

but rather disappointing handkerchief trick?"

"Easily, in both cases, and a very simple matter. First let me call your attention to a point which you overlooked in your examination of the weapon in question," and the detective took the revolver from the table. "All five chambers are loaded with 32 calibre cartridges as you are no doubt aware," he continued, "but you overlooked the fact that none of these cartridges had been discharged."

"I beg your pardon," said the coroner, taking the weapon "the bullet is missing from this cartridge and the chamber is also blackened from its discharge as you learned, much to your chagrin, I believe, from the stain on your handkerchief."

"True, the bullet is missing, or at least it is not in the cartridge," replied Grigson, "but you will observe that the cap which ignites the powder is still intact."

"By, Jove! you are right, I never thought of that," said the chagrined coroner, and then added, "I see! the bullet has been removed."

"Exactly," was the reply, "These scratches near the bullet end of the cartridge clearly prove that to be the case."

"But how about the blackened barrel?"

"My dear Wilkinson, you are really too easy," laughed Grigson. "Does that smell like burned powder?" he added holding the stained handkerchief to the nose of the astonished coroner.

"It certainly does not," was the answer, "what is it?"

"I strongly suspect that it is lamp-black. You may recall the butler's assertion that Mr. De Costa never used the lamp which was kept filled and cleaned on his table. It was evidently used last night, but not by De Costa and not for reading, I suspect," and the detective pointed to the smoke-blackened chimney.

"I believe you are right," said the discomfited Wilkinson after a lengthy pause, during which he appeared to be in deep thought, "and I assume this to be your theory. After committing the deed the murderer looked about for some means of covering up his

crime. Seeing the revolver, which lay in the drawer found open by the butler when he discovered the body this morning, and which De Costa had probably opened during the evening, he seized it and placed it at the side of his victim, first removing the bullet and powder from one of the cartridges and blackening the chamber with lampblack procured from the smoked chimney of the lamp which he lighted for that purpose. He was evidently disturbed at this point in his labors—as he failed to similarly blacken the barrel—and made his escape through the door leading to the porch. He was undoubtedly a man of some ingenuity and one who had had experience in the use of weapons. Doubtless he hoped that the unexploded cap would escape other eyes as it did mine.”

“You have given my theory exactly as far as you have gone,” said Grigson, “but you have not yet accounted for the wound or stated the cause of death.”

“I had assumed that the wound was the cause of death,” replied the coroner, meekly.

“It would have been fatal no doubt had it been inflicted before death. Such was not the case however. De Costa met his fate from an entirely different cause as I will convince you later. That wound was inflicted after life was extinct, and to produce the impression, which the murderer sought to convey, of death by suicide. This is clearly proven by the fact that no blood was discovered on the carpet. By the way, here is the bullet, somewhat the worse for its brief sojourn in the fireplace, from which I rescued it, but you will see that the end, which is still intact, fits the empty shell exactly.”

“How then was the wound inflicted?” interrupted Wilkinson.

“I am loth to believe that you have not discovered that easily ascertainable fact,” replied the detective, with a superior smile. “How else than with this poker? You will call to mind,” he continued, “the butler’s assertion that it was never used. You will also observe that it had been used and that the end is slightly bent from having been placed in the fire and allowed to become white hot. The weight of

this knob at one end, the other being firmly embedded in the coals, accounts for the bend, or, rather, the bend coupled with its blackened appearance, proves that it must have been placed in the fire. When it became white hot it was used to produce the wound which you believed caused by a bullet fired close to the head, and to the burned appearance of which you called my attention.”

“What then was the cause of death?” asked the coroner in some bewilderment.

“I will tell you my theory,” replied Grigson. “You observed the peculiar spot at the back of the neck, did you not, and likewise the vise-like set of the jaw?”

“Yes.”

“Did you also observe the eyes?”

“Not particularly,” replied the puzzled coroner.

“Let us try an experiment,” said Grigson. “Bring the lamp—no not that one, the electric drop-lamp this way.”

“Will it reach here?”

“Yes, I think so. Now pass the light back and forth before De Costa’s eyes. Do you observe anything peculiar? Ha! I thought as much. Now take the lamp away and look again.” An exclamation of astonishment escaped the coroner’s lips.

“Well, this is something new in my experience. It is positively uncanny,” he added after a pause.

The exclamation was called forth by the peculiar effect which the lamp had upon the pupils of the dead man’s eyes. As the light approached the face they slowly dilated until the iris became a narrow thread-like rim, but the moment it was removed the pupil contracted to the size of a pin prick. The coroner said something about poisoning from belladonna.

“No,” replied Grigson, “belladonna might account for the dilation of the pupils but not for their contraction, nor for the set jaws or the spot on the neck.” Then he continued impressively, “I know of but one thing which can account for the conjoined appearance of all three phenomena.”

“What may that one thing be?” inquired the coroner hardly able to re-

strain his curiosity sufficiently to allow Grigson to proceed. Grigson, however, was not to be forced into a premature disclosure.

"You know, Wilkinson," he continued, deliberately, "that I am greatly interested in scientific research and keep pretty well posted concerning the latest discoveries. A short time ago I came across a monograph written by a noted chemist. I took it up quite by accident but became deeply interested and re-read it several times in order to fix the important points in my memory. The reason for my interest will be readily understood when I say, that while the major portion of the monograph was devoted to a description of the physical appearance and mode of discovery of the substance dealt with, the latter portion described the results of a series of experiments performed on various animals for the purpose of ascertaining its effect upon the vital functions. In every case the result was the same—instantaneous death—and every case was accompanied by peculiar physical phenomena. Immediately upon the injection of a drop of a chemical salt formed with this substance (to secure uniformity this was in each case injected near the top of the spinal column) the creature became rapidly unconscious, a round spot of a very unusual greenish tinge appeared where the needle had pricked the skin, the jaws became so tightly set it was impossible to force them apart, and the pupils of the eyes contracted, so as to be barely discernible. But the most important point of all, and the one which I depend upon to establish my contention, was discovered quite by accident. The writer of the monograph happened to bring the dead body of a rabbit, with which he had been experimenting, near an electric light in order to more closely observe the creature's eyes, when to his astonishment the pupils slowly dilated but immediately contracted when the light was removed. An ordinary lamp was tried but with no such result. The light generated by an electrical current appeared to be the indispensable factor in the production of this curious phenomenon, which it is believed, occurs

under no other conditions except those given." Grigson paused and the coroner bent eagerly forward.

"What is the strange substance of which you are speaking," he asked, "Is it vegetable or mineral?"

"It is a mineral and is called 'Karl-ium,'" said the detective. "Good morning, Mr. Wilkinson," and taking his hat and coat he disappeared down the gravel walk leading from the house.

Half way from the gate he paused, stooped down, and picked up an object lying by the side of the path. It was a woman's chatelaine bag.

CHAPTER VI.

The afterglow of a gorgeous sunset at sea—rose changing to purple, purple melting to azure, sky and sea blending in opalescent tints, and, but for the regular pulsing of the ship, one might be floating through infinite color and space. It was the last night at sea; to-morrow the *Campania* would reach her destination, New York, and already the passengers seemed to feel the restlessness of that great restless city.

Of the people on deck two were especially noticeable, a woman languidly reclining in a steamer chair, whose youthful figure strangely belied the weary face, hopelessly sad but with traces of rare beauty, and eyes that had gazed into sorrow's own for many years, but still with a latent fire in their depths which told how great her courage had been and could be again when needed. Her companion pacing the deck, retracing his steps before her with that mathematical precision which always denotes deep feeling, was striking in the sensitive beauty of his face, mobile as a woman's,—the face of a poet or an artist.

"Geoffrey." The voice, low but vibrant, caused the restless pacing to cease and brought the man to her side with a tender solicitude in his whole bearing and a certain doglike devotion in his eyes pathetic to see. "Some way I feel to-night that we are not only nearing the end of our voyage but also the end of all these years of miserable misunderstanding, and dread, and I wish to say what you would never let

me say before, you most generous of men, that your devotion and sympathy alone have enabled me to endure these long years of exile and disgrace, though both unmerited, and my heart is heavy for you, my friend, for your lost career, your shattered hopes and dreams. Fame and fortune were yours by right and your life has been wasted in my hopeless cause. Nothing can bring back the lost years or the dreams of youth and I am not worthy of it all, Geoffrey; no woman is worth all this!"

"Corona, you must not speak of this—you know you are more to me than fame or life itself and to be near you in your sorrow, to feel that perhaps my sympathy has made your life easier to bear, is heaven's own reward."

The man had drawn a seat close to his companion's side. The warm rosy tints of sea and sky had deepened and faded into the grays of evening now, somber, sad hues, and Geoffrey Mayhew, sensitive alike to colors and sounds, shivered slightly as he gazed into the gathering gloom. But this woman's voice, even in its saddest cadences, had ever soothed and charmed his moods, and as she resumed he gave her that concentrated attention and silent sympathy which long years of perfect understanding had acquired.

"I believe the end of it all will be soon now, Geoffrey,—something tells me so—and yet, death alone can ever outwit Ferdinand De Costa. Ah! if hate could kill, he would have died a thousand deaths," she added passionately, and a certain cruel look flashed over the usually tender face and the voice was hard now. Exclamation and look were instantaneous, but the man at her side, who vibrated like a delicately strung instrument at every discord of sound or color, winced and a look of acute pain passed over his face. "Don't Corona,—don't let us think or speak of these things to-night, dear."

"Oh," she replied impatiently, "I have thought of nothing else for nearly twenty years, and I must talk or go mad," she added pathetically. "Why—I have asked this question a thousand times to myself as well as to you, Geoffrey,—why should my father so de-

sire my marriage with Ferdinand De Costa? A mere girl of eighteen, already betrothed to another, and that betrothal sanctioned by both parents then suddenly, giving no reason, insisting on this awful marriage to a man who came to our house only on business, which made my father stern and preoccupied for days afterwards,—a man old enough to be my father, and whom I instinctively feared and hated. And my mother, too, with tears in her eyes urged me, 'for my father's sake,'—but now I know the tears were for me. How could this help my father? Why should he need anything of this cold, hard man? We had always had every comfort; Oh, shall I ever understand it all! My poor mother died without understanding."

Geoffrey Mayhew, whose passive role of listener was tacitly understood at these times, unobtrusively, almost gently, lighted a cigar, as though fearing to disturb Corona's narrative, and she continued.

"The horrors of that wedding, the gloom of that house, the clang of the street cars which vibrated through the great empty rooms, and I, who had always lived in sunshine and happiness, shut up in that dismal prison! No one ever came to the house, except on business and often they would remain until nearly morning, talking, talking. Sometimes the voices would rise angrily and I would be lying upstairs shivering with fright. Why, the very servants seemed to feel an indescribable fear haunting the house and would go about with white scared faces. Fear lurked in the shadows and cowered behind the doors and I grew so timid that the swaying of a drapery would send me flying upstairs to my room, my very blood frozen by fright. I nearly went mad, Geoffrey, during that year. My father and mother were traveling in the West at that time on some business father was interested in, and there was no one to whom I could go. Then when my baby came I hoped and prayed that sunshine and happiness had come with her; but no, this monster took that hope from me also and would not even leave my child with me, but must give her to the care

of hired servants in apartments in a remote part of the house. Was ever such Machiavelian cunning for torturing a woman! Oh! I believe him mad, and so cunning in his madness that no one has ever suspected it! Well, as you know, at last I came away. Soon after joining my mother we went abroad, my father still remaining in the West on business. We lived for years in Italy and France, purposely avoiding London, because you were there and all my poor broken heart was with you. Then, while in Rome, our tried and trusty maid, Phoebe, that rare product of rugged New England, who always handled my belongings with a kind of reverent awe as though they were the relics of a saint and she a devotee, became so homesick for her native hills that in very pity we sent her home, although loth to part with such faithful, untiring devotion. Then my mother sickened and died and thus left alone, my father, now a wanderer on the earth or lying in an unknown grave, not knowing where to turn or what to do, fate brought us together again."

"But you have told me, Corona, that De Costa was fond of the child and most kind to her."

"Yes, Marie has often said that he was absolutely devoted to Grace,—he named her Grace,—and really seemed like another being when with her. Child! why, she must be older now than I was when married to her father. It does not seem possible! There are times, Geoffrey, when my heart almost breaks with longing to see her, to clasp her in my arms, to hear her call me mother!"

"Poor Corona, you will ere long I trust. Surely, this must be the end of all your wanderings; but you need rest to-night, and perhaps, who knows, joy may come with the morning."

"Well, if you will rouse my drowsy maid I will go below now. Good night, Geoffrey."

"'Till the morning, Corona."

All night long Geoffrey Mayhew sat gazing into the darkened waters; all night long his thoughts surged through his brain in tumultuous confusion, reviewing the scenes of his life in pano-

ramic procession. Most vivid among those scenes was the picture of a slender young girl whose proud poise of the dainty head contrasted strangely with the almost pathetic droop of the red lips, like a prophesy of coming sorrow, and by her side a dark handsome youth, full of enthusiastic ambition. Life lay in most alluring paths before him, for his was that rare gift of the gods, the life of an artist; and for this sweet maiden, who had just plighted troth with him, what could and would he not do! Then the delight of the life abroad, pursuing his studies in preparation for the work which he loved with all the ardor of his artistic soul. He could and would be great for her sake!

Then came the news of her sudden marriage to the wealthy banker, with never a word of explanation or regret from her and the shock of his cruel disappointment had seemed to paralyze alike ambition and effort, for the promise of rare genius in the youth became but mediocre ability in the man, and when again they met he seemed incapable of any action, only able to suffer in sympathy with her, and dream of what might have been.

What had this world-weary, saddened man and woman to do with those two joyous, hopeful young creatures? Slowly and sadly he followed them through all their devious wanderings up to the present day, the day now streaming in shafts of light from the eastern sky, driving black night into the shadows before the fierce light of a new dawn, and as his dreams fled with the night, he roused himself with an effort, feeling numb and weary from his vigil and with a strange foreboding of impending evil,—an indefinable something which took no tangible form as yet in his mind.

The usual excitement on nearing land was evident on the Campania, as with slow and stately mein, unhasting and losing not one atom of her dignity,—that perfect dignity of an English Cunarder,—she swept majestically up the harbor.

Apart and aloof from the eager expectant passengers, stood Corona De Costa and Geoffrey Mayhew, their

faces wan in the morning light. The way was divided now and as they gazed into each other's eyes, each read there these questions, fraught with such intense meaning to these two sad souls;—Would they ever meet again? and if so, when and where? And already, fate, with a certain grim humor, was preparing the answer.

CHAPTER VII.

W-h-a-n-g! Long and drawn-out went the insolent bell on the wall just at the head of John Norton's bed, followed by two short, sharp little whang, whangs.

The telephone—one of the imps of modern civilization—had invaded Rock Springs and it had rung 12 up there on John Norton's bedroom wall; and John Norton had just gotten to sleep, it seemed, for the first time in many days and nights. But he always awakened when that bell rang 12 and fell out of bed to say "Hello!" to the saucy little thing.

Who would not say "Hello!" to a telephone, even if he cursed himself for doing so the next minute? The curiosity said to be characteristic of women just compels one to say "Hello!" If one could always see the other end of the line, some telephones would not be answered.

But in a moment Doctor Norton's wife heard him say, "Yes, I'll come."

"Where is it?" she asked.

"To Bitter Creek," replied the doctor.

"But you can't get there. You know the bridge is down; it has been pouring all day and it is frightful now."

"Well," he said, "they have waited all day for the doctor from the East side and the girl has a broken leg. I'll take old faithful Dolly and she'll get me through safely."

So he began to make ready and soon was astride his old chestnut mare with a bundle of splints and bandages slung across her shoulders in front of him.

Dr. John Norton didn't usually think of trouble until he saw it—and so tonight. But now he saw it, and that in plenty. An awful storm had been

raging all day;—it was still raining and a black night to start out for a twenty mile horseback ride. It was far worse than his better half had imagined. Once, after fording what was ordinarily a small brook, but now a great rushing river, the faithful beast fairly swimming across with her burden, he hesitated and wished he had not started. To return now, however, was out of the question. He knew what lay behind him, and he knew he could not retrace his steps. What was ahead he knew not and so he hurried on.

With far greater fury had the storm been raging in Bitter Creek. Since ten o'clock that morning the sky had been black as night; it was enough to frighten the most fearless. Such a glorious morning and such an awful day! The thunder rolled peal after peal, and old men looked up the mountain side, to see if it were really staying where its Creator put it. Some were almost persuaded that the mountains had fallen apart and were coming down upon them. A strapping boy, with a face usually sunburnt, but now ashen white, related on the piazza of "The Great Western Hotel" that the old landmark, "Table Rock" was no more! A great crooked, zigzag, forked streak of lightning illumined the heavens and lo! their faith returned, for they saw the mountains standing as firm and high as ever in the grandeur of their power.

But all this was as nothing to the awfulness in the hearts of many,—nearly all—perhaps all—of the inhabitants of Bitter Creek. By this time everyone knew that a passenger had left the 5:27 train last night unbeknown to herself. She didn't know she had gotten off, they said. Some looked askance at this; but some gave credence to it, for many had felt or imagined a peculiar influence since her arrival. Some with good reason, others because of unexplainable influence—probably as some chemicals part with their water of crystallization when conditions allow.

At any rate there was something queer about it all, and a gloom other than that caused by the elements was

over Bitter Creek. Some said this strange passenger lay dead up in the canyon, shot through the temple; others said she had fired a shot and killed one of their own citizens.

Greater than all other gloom was that which enveloped John Gardner. His heart seemed so big and cold! But the necessity for action relieved him of the great nerve tension. As soon as he had seen the life in Grace De Costa, he picked her up in his arms—seemingly lifeless to be sure, for again she had fainted—and started for the hotel. He saw the temple wound and with the right leg doubled under as though there were a joint half way between knee and ankle, he knew the seriousness of the situation. He at once concluded that she had been shot, but he thought not to apprehend the murderer—only to care for the sufferer.

It was a hard path along the canyon and up the bank and a long way to the hotel; but Gardner had strong arms, a steady foot, and an unswerving eye, and soon his precious burden was borne into "The Great Western Hotel." Bad news is a fast traveller and in some way the landlady had heard of the accident and had made ready her own bedroom on the first floor just off the dining room. Gardner, Mrs. Lynch, and Phoebe had made Miss De Costa as comfortable as possibilities allowed.

Once upon a comfortable bed, the sufferer regained partial consciousness. She told them that she had fallen, and that she suffered most from the wound in her head. Phoebe had not had experience with the world to no purpose. She knew what suffering was and how to relieve it, and while Gardner was gone to telephone for a doctor, and to telegraph, if possible, to Mr. De Costa and the aunt in Ogden, Phoebe got warm water ready and bathed the bruises. The care of the broken leg, however, was a little too much for her, and she sighed many times for the doctor; and later in the day she went many times to the window to look and see if he were coming. Just to know he had started would be some comfort to her.

But she must temporarily dress the wounds for the sharp rocks had cut through the flesh. When she straightened the leg out, she saw for the first time how serious the condition was, and saw the reason for Miss De Costa's fainting. Then a little stream of blood spurted out as if shot from a gun, and so it was, for it was a large artery of the leg which was severed, and the heart was forcing out blood with every beat. Something must be done and that quickly, too. Phoebe knew just what that something was and soon the thigh above the fracture was bandaged neatly and tightly as possible.

Gardner returned to tell them that the doctor would soon be there. As Mrs. Lynch, Phoebe, and Gardner talked together of the misfortune, Miss De Costa once in a while said something to them about her walk. It seemed, she said, when yesterday's express pulled out of Bitter Creek station, as though some great calamity were in store for her.

But she talked less and less, and her face grew whiter and whiter, and soon Phoebe noticed that her hands and feet were very cold. She hardly spoke to them now, and not always was what she said quite coherent. She said a good deal about a locket and a miniature, and once or twice she sighed and said if she only had her mother she would not mind. Once in a while, too, she seemed to notice her pain.

Again Gardner went to the telephone, but soon came back with the news that the operator was unable to reach New York City or Ogden by wire—it was storming so furiously they could not even telephone. He thought, however, that the doctor had probably started. The day seemed an eternity. The storm had constantly increased. Some one was always at the window hoping to see help come to them, for every hour Miss De Costa grew weaker and at six o'clock she would hardly answer their questions. A horseman had been sent both East and West for a physician. About seven the horseman from the East returned, saying he had gone

as far as he could and had to retrace his steps.

Then Phoebe began more active measures of stimulation for her patient and Gardner kept constantly at the telephone. Men were sent out to see if they could locate near by any break in the wires. Finally a little after nine in the evening, it was learned that Doctor Norton, of Rock Springs, was on the way, and all felt easier; within two hours his faithful old Dolly had gotten him to Bitter Creek. But splints and bandages were of no immediate use, for the experienced practitioner saw at a glance that his patient was suffering from shock and to bring her back to consciousness was his first duty.

It was a difficult task, and all night long he worked. The labors of Phoebe had not been in vain. The mustard plasters and hot water bottles were serving their purpose and Doctor Norton simply re-enforced and augmented these measures. He made the water hotter and the plasters larger and with his hypodermic needle sought to whip up the flagging heart.

When morning came their efforts were rewarded and Doctor Norton pronounced Grace De Costa on the safe side. The bleeding arteries had been tied, and the leg placed in temporary splints.

But her journey to Ogden was indefinitely postponed, and her stay in Bitter Creek was destined to be longer than anyone had supposed.

CHAPTER VIII.

"Not to be ministered unto, but to minister." Phoebe, like the Master whom she loved and served, was a living illustration of these words. In and out of the sick room at "The Great Western Hotel" she moved with alert and noiseless step. Her touch was as balm to the wounds of the sufferer. Grace De Costa would have passed into eternity long before medical assistance was secured, had not the faithful Phoebe fought death back with all the courage and bravery of her kind. Doctor Norton had been generous in his praise of her service and skill, and had spoken hopefully of the patient.

But three days had already elapsed since the accident and Grace De Costa was far from out of danger. Shock had been safely passed over, but the wound had become septic and delirium was present. She talked much of Sister Agatha and the convent, and called to her mother often; but that was all.

In the silent night watches, Phoebe, listening to the faint moaning and incoherent murmurings of the suffering girl, went back again in memory across the great water to the far distant country where she lived again in the service of the two beautiful, high-bred gentlewomen whom she loved as her very life. Ever since her eyes had fallen upon the face and form of Grace De Costa, the undercurrent of her thoughts had been of these dear friends of bygone days.

"Seems as tho' this poor sufferin' lamb was Miss Corona herself sometimes," murmured Phoebe softly to herself. "Queer how I git these two mixed up! When I saw her first I wanted to touch her and I guess I've got the chance, tho' the Lord knows I wished her no harm. I love to take care of her, just as I did that other one, an' if the time ever comes when she opens them eyes again and I hear her voice speakin' to me, it's all I'll ask."

"The Great Western Hotel" was still wrapped in mystery and gloom! All communication with East and West was still cut off by the ravages of the terrible storm and everything was at a standstill. The only crumbs of comfort John Gardner received were from Phoebe's hands, and she dispensed them as freely and as often as she could.

"Land sakes alive, Mr. Gardner! Don't you go to gittin' all used up! This beautiful white lily is only just bent and bruised a little, that's all. She'll come up all nice as ever again in a little while with good care!"

God bless these messengers of peace and consolation! How often they come to us in simple homespun, and what teachers and preachers are such as they!

Geoffrey Mayhew sat alone in the apartment at his hotel in New York on the evening following the arrival of the steamer *Campania*. During the

day he had chanced to meet an acquaintance of former days with whom he had promised to dine at the club to-night and was now awaiting him.

In full evening dress, the classical beauty of the man was more clearly defined than when last we saw him pacing the steamer's deck. As a harmonious frame intensifies and enriches a painting, so elegance of dress and surroundings bring out the beauties of human form and feature.

Looking into the face of this man to-night, we must instinctively notice, too, that it possesses an alert keenness of expression indicative of the birth of new intents and purposes. Geoffrey Mayhew had lived long within the last twenty-four hours, and in the midst of his indescribable loneliness after leaving her—the one woman in all the world to him—there had arisen within him a desire to fathom some part, at least, of the great mystery surrounding him and the woman he loved.

Crushed as he had been by the news of Corona Von Post's marriage to Ferdinand De Costa, he had lacked the spirit to do and dare, had simply bent to his fate. Now, after listening to Corona's sad story and hearing the pathos of her cry—"I have asked myself this question thousands of times, Geoffrey, 'why did my father desire this cruel marriage with Ferdinand De Costa?'"—he determined to throw off the lethargy which had held him captive for years and to rise in the strength of his full-fledged manhood and find, if possible, some clew to this mystery.

He was once more upon American shores, within touch of Ferdinand De Costa. He would know something more of this man! As for Mr. Von Post—Corona's father—there remained no doubt, so far as known, that he still lived, though perhaps as an exile. He must be a man now nearing seventy, but Mayhew could not imagine him with the softening, mellowing tints of age upon him. No; he was a man who would harden with age, and wherever he was to-day Geoffrey Mayhew verily believed that there were hard, cold lines upon and about him. How well he recalled this man who claimed to be his friend and approved of him

as a husband for his daughter, and then in his short absence forced this evil marriage with De Costa. Why did he do it? The Von Posts had much money and surely this man could not have been so base as to sacrifice his daughter to save or to gain paltry dollars. Why, then? That was the question that had haunted them for years. Mr. Von Post was a peculiar man—seemed ever seeking something—always in research yet never apparently attaining anything of value. Something took him, suddenly, to the West—no one knew what and no one ever knew the reason or result of his journeyings. Yet in many ways he was a brilliant man, and there were many attractive traits in his character. Geoffrey Mayhew was an artist, by nature. There was nothing in this man that appealed to him—therefore he never studied him deeply. In all the after years how often he wished that he had known him better! Now, he would make an effort to know something of both these men—the mutual persecutors. There was something thrilling about being at home again; and with his new resolve came fresh energy and zeal which made Geoffrey Mayhew ten years younger in appearance.

As his friend was announced he rose with alacrity, extending the hand of welcome, and soon the two were on their way to the club, stepping along the thronging pavement, shoulder to shoulder as in the old days.

The newsboys were crying the papers and Mayhew tossed a nickel to one little chap, and took in exchange the latest evening edition. Under the full glare of an electric light, his eyes fell on the heavy head-lines

"MYSTERIOUS MURDER
OF FERDINAND DE COSTA."

CHAPTER IX.

The first week of Grace De Costa's incarceration in "The Great Western Hotel" passed like an awful dream. What with acute suffering, restlessness, and weakness, and the narcotics given to alleviate pain, her condition was something akin to a continuous nightmare, while the anxiety on the part of those who cared for, and were most interested in her, made the

hours pass as though weighted beyond endurance.

The storm continued for twenty hours, during which time, and after, all communication between towns of the surrounding country was shut off so that it was impossible to reach Ogden by wire for several days. When at last the message of the accident was sent, the news was far less tragic in character than that first penned by Gardner while awaiting Doctor Norton's arrival.

Mrs. Pettis, Grace's aunt, whose committee meetings were so interfered with by Grace's non-appearance in Ogden as planned, now forsook them altogether and, as soon as possible upon receipt of the telegram from Gardner, boarded the train for Bitter Creek, bringing with her a trunk well filled with all manner of comforts and dainties for the invalid.

She and Grace had not met for several years, when she had made a flying visit to New York from Washington, where she had been sent as a delegate from some one of her numerous clubs and organizations, some two and twenty in number. Grace happened to be home from the convent, a girl of fourteen, although she seemed older, she was so self possessed, large of her age, reserved, the companion of her father, with many very decided ideas and opinions on subjects of which most young girls take little account.

"A great frank, honest boy," was Mrs. Pettis' mental note, "Can we ever polish her?" And now it was ten years later and here she was on her way to Grace, who was in a most unexplainable situation and predicament.

Grace, expecting her aunt, impatiently awaits the arrival of the only relative she knows in the world save her father, and, always excepting the dear mother who she firmly believes, if alive, will one day come to her and be loved and adored as she now worships the pictured mother, whose unresponsive lips she has so often kissed and of whom she has so often dreamed.

John Gardner offered to meet Mrs. Pettis at the station, and he sees to

her baggage and makes himself generally useful and agreeable. During the short journey from station to hotel, he acquaints her with the details of Grace's accident, retiring only upon leaving her opposite the door leading to Grace's room.

A light tap on the door and Mrs. Pettis enters and beholds an object of loveliness and grace long to be remembered. "Such eyes," thought she, and "O Heavens, a straight nose. Poor Janet." But the fact of the superiority of a straight nose over a snub does not in the least abate the warmth of her greeting as she notes how truly beautiful is Grace De Costa.

Her hair parted and brushed from her face and braided in two heavy plaits gives a look of classic simplicity to the contour of the well-shaped head, while the pathetic droop to the mouth, in token of acute suffering yet present, gives the beautiful face so pure and white an almost Madonna-like appearance. As she lies there clean and spotless in Mrs. Lynch's bed no less white than she, her arms outstretched toward her aunt with the light of love and longing for more love in return in her fine eyes, it is small wonder that Mrs. Pettis forgets her dignity and position as chairman of a thousand committees and hastening across the room to the bedside, takes the girl in her arms and cuddles and coos over her as only a woman and a mother can and only a woman knows how to fully appreciate.

After leaving aunt and niece alone for the first few minutes Phoebe enters the room, bringing for Grace's refreshment a most delicious concoction of her own which is neither egg-nog, mead nor flip, but a pleasing combination of all these, bearing agreeableness as to flavor, as well as nourishment and strength to the body.

"Aunt Inez," said Grace, "this is Phoebe, dear Phoebe, who has saved my life, or, rather, kept it during these past days. What I could have done without her I do not know, for it was she who stood by and did for me during those awful hours before the doctor could get here from Rock Springs,

when it seemed to me that every breath exhausted my strength too fully for me to ever be able to draw another," and the long sigh drawn at recollection of the horror tells more than words of the shock and strain of those hours.

Phoebe, only waiting to make sure that Grace takes the nourishment—"for she ain't et more'n a fly in all these days," she says, "and now we want to perk her up so't she can enjoy herself a little before she leaves us," turns, and after a quick silent survey of the room, known only to caretakers and night-watchers, leaves it silently.

"Who is that woman?" asks Mrs. Pettis.

"Why she is Phoebe, one of the 'help', they do not say 'servants' out here, and I love her dearly, Aunt Inez."

Mrs. Pettis says nothing. Her affections and love are, according to her own mind, better placed, and she will see that Grace forgets Phoebe as soon as she is away from her.

"Now tell me, who is the young man who met me at the train this morning?"

"That is Mr. Gardner, the one who found me on the mountain and brought me to the hotel. Just think, I might have lain there no one knows how long, until they missed me here. It would certainly have been all day and I might have died out there and you never have known what became of me. But Mr. Gardner heard me cry for help before I fainted and when he got to me there I was apparently dead and he picked me up and carried me all the way back to the hotel. He saved my life," said Grace, tears coming into her eyes. "And only think, Aunt Inez," she went on, "he knows papa through a mutual friend and has written him telling him about my accident, besides writing him every day to let him know how I am getting along. Is he not kind?"

Aunt Inez thinks he is kind, very kind, but registers a mental resolve to remove this very susceptible piece of humanity to her own home-keeping and jurisdiction as soon as possible.

"And now you must be made presentable," she says. "Whose clothes have you on? Mrs. Lynch's? H'm I thought so—unbleached cotton, agate buttons, and cotton lace. However, I have plenty of everything in my trunk and you must be made respectable immediately. No one will see you of course, but self-respect must be restored," she continues, quite forgetting that Mrs. Lynch has given of the very best in her store and that Grace had already been spotlessly arrayed that day in honor of Mrs. Pettis' arrival. Calling to Phoebe, she manifests her desire to see Grace again "decently clad," thereby hurting the good woman's feelings and establishing an animus which it requires much of Phoebe's Christian grace to subdue.

Giving Phoebe the key to the trunk she remains with Grace, chatting and talking of one thing and another until Phoebe reappears with the desired articles of comfort and adornment, and soon the stricken heroine is arrayed according to Mrs. Pettis' mind and satisfaction, though the ministration is anything but a joy to Grace. During the ordeal, for such it always seems when one is suffering from pain and weariness, whether of mind or body, Mrs. Pettis tells Grace of the safe arrival of her trunk and belongings left on the train, tells of the plans made for her and now destroyed and of all that shall be done for her once she is able to be moved from "this place," as she unfeelingly denominates "The Great Western Hotel," Bitter Creek, and chats volubly concerning her own busy life in Ogden.

"We must get away from here very soon Grace. When I see the doctor, I shall tell him how imperative it is that you should be moved as quickly as possible, for on the tenth of next month our state meeting of the S. C. R. A. P. meets in Ogden and I must be there to preside. While I am here, you are well cared for but it is not at all the wise thing for you to be left here alone among strangers."

"Strangers!" thought Grace. True they were strangers, considering the shortness of the time she had known them, called them by name, and been

able to recognize their faces. Less than a week had passed since she left her father and started on the Western journey they together had planned after receiving Aunt Inez's letter. John Gardner and Phoebe were as unknown to her as though they had never existed and now—Phoebe by her gentleness and unselfish devotion had a place in Grace's heart second only to that of Sister Agatha, whom Grace adored and to whom she owed all the strength and beauty of her pure young heart.

As for Gardner it seemed as though she had always known him. He was her ideal of manliness and strength and had been ever since he lifted her so carefully from the rock and bore her to this haven of refuge. His agonized cry, "Grace, Grace, speak to me," and the tender look in his face as she finally opened her eyes from the long faint, come back to her time and again in her reveries and dreams, and she is seized with a wild longing to hear him speak thus again and, hearing, to answer his cry.

No, she was in no hurry to go to Ogden and when she did go—well, she had made up her mind to take Phoebe with her, and certainly she should ask Mr. Gardner to come to see her at the first opportunity.

Grace's reverie was interrupted by her aunt asking, "Have you heard from your father?"

"Yes," laughed Grace, "I had a telegram immediately he received Mr. Gardner's message of my accident, saying he had written, or should write, I forget which, but beyond that nothing has come. When I am home I have to remind him of such little duties as letters, business appointments, and so on and inasmuch as I am not there to either dictate or address my own letters, I presume I shall not receive any."

"That reminds me," said Mrs. Pettis, rising, "that I must send a line to the girls at home. Of course you have no writing materials so I'll go up to my room and when I come back will bring you a book that Janet slipped into the trunk for you."

Thus left to herself Grace's thoughts go over and over again the events

of the past few days;—her leaving the train which went on without her, leaving her standing so helpless on the platform of the station, her meeting with John Gardner; his kind solicitude and practical help in her predicament, the delightful tete-a-tete supper in the big bare dining-room; later, the trip to the one store to buy tooth-brush and comb; then the delightful morning walk and climb up the mountain, the—the woman. Why! she had forgotten all about her until now! Who was she and why should she speak so ominously? Was she a clairvoyant, predicting coming disaster? Well it came all right enough, and speedily, thought Grace, but what did it all mean?

How thankful she was that it was Mr. Gardner instead of that awful woman who had found her, alone and helpless. How well he had carried her, how strong he was and she weighing one hundred and twenty-five pounds. Yes, he was handsome and clever. Phoebe said so and told her that his room was filled with all manner of "contraptions" whatever she meant by that. Clever, good, tender, strong—different from any man she had ever known,—she—Grace must have fallen asleep, as I presume the reader may during this sentimental ebullition, which must be excused only on the ground of Grace's warm heart and the fact that never in her four and twenty years had it been touched before, for she was awakened by a thunderous knock on her door and Tim, the landlady's well-meaning but ill-doing son, brings in a small package bearing stamp and seal of a well known express company. "It's for you Miss Grace," and his own politeness so chokes and astonishes him that he falls over two chairs and a table in making his exit from the room.

As any little occurrence, however slight, is regarded in the light of a small excitement, breaking the monotony of a sick-room day, Grace loses no time in opening the package. Her nimble fingers soon find the inside and, uttering a joyous cry, she draws forth from the box containing it what she believes to be her miniature. Up-

on opening the case, however, and exposing the beautiful face to view,—she sees at a glance that while this is undoubtedly her mother's face,—features,—eyes, nose, mouth, and all identical with those of the lost miniature,—added years had made the beautiful face more beautiful, the sad smile more lovely, and the deep eyes more tender than those of the girl mother whose miniature had also come to Grace from an unknown, mysterious source.

If the sending of the first miniature to Grace De Costa, then a mere child at the convent, was a mystery, how much greater was the mystery of this, the second and older likeness of her mother. Who would or could know that she, who was supposed to be with her aunt and cousins in Ogden, had by some strange fatality been landed in Bitter Creek for an indefinite period? Who could have known the treasure this picture was to her, particularly now that the other which by the same ill fate that seemed to have decreed all this suffering both physical and mental, was apparently forever lost to her sight,—for in view of the storm coming so soon after, there was no hope of ever finding anything lost previous to that time. Mr. Gardner said so and of course he knew.

In whose possession had this miniature been all these years? for Grace's mother must now be ten, fifteen, perhaps more, years older than those represented by this, her picture. There was no mark on the outer wrapper which gave any enlightenment as to the source of the gift, no familiar handwriting nor clue whatsoever as to whence the package was sent. All these facts Grace's quick mind and eye soon grasped and it was with mingled feelings that she turned to her aunt, who had entered unobserved and stood at the foot of the bed curiously regarding her.

"It is my mother, it is, it is," she exclaims, "but not the lost miniature. You know I lost the one I had had so many years the day I fell on Table Rock. O! I have missed it so!" And bursting into tears, she hands the locket to her aunt.

Mrs. Pettis had never known her

brother's wife. Circumstances had prevented her being present at his marriage and the trouble, misfortune, or estrangement, whichever it was that had separated husband and wife, had occurred during the year that Mr. Pettis and she had spent in England, to the utter dejection of the prosaic former and entire satisfaction of the ambitious latter. When she returned the name of wife and mother was a forbidden one in the household of De Costa so that for years her curiosity and amazement at the termination of what she always regarded as a most brilliant match, was still unsatisfied.

Now she gazed into the beautiful face, noting and remarking various points of Grace's resemblance, wondering at the tragedy of the cruel separation from husband and child, while uppermost in her mind is the thought, "where did this come from?"

"We must ask Mr. Gardner to help us about this," remarks Grace presently, "He will know what is best to do. Why there he is now," and calling his name in spite of Mrs. Pettis' horrified expression, as she hears his step pass the door on his way to the dining-room, he enters the room in answer to her summons.

"O, Mr. Gardner," she cries, "just see what I've got," holding up the treasure.

"Your miniature!"

"Yes, not mine but one taken of my mother later. Just see how beautiful she is. Now where did it come from? Won't you ask all about it at the express office—where it came from,—who sent it and all?" These and many other disjointed questions and remarks come like an avalanche from her lips so great is her excitement, and Gardner has difficulty in obtaining the full import of the matter; nevertheless with Mrs. Pettis' help he manages to get some little idea of the receipt of the mysterious picture and carefully placing the wrapper containing address and company's stamp in his pocket he departs, promising to attend to the matter immediately after dinner.

As he leaves the room, he meets Phoebe coming in with a tray containing Grace's dinner. She too, has

to share Grace's joy at recovering something that will take the place of the lost image of her mother.

"Come and look at her, Phoebe—and tell me if you ever saw anyone so lovely in your life. No, I shan't eat a mouthful until you have looked at this," and she holds it up to Phoebe's gaze. But Phoebe, setting down the tray, busies herself with the duty at hand; and in the arrangement of pillows and various schemes and inventions for the comfort of the invalid, notes and picks from off the rug by the side of the bed a card, which had evidently fallen there and been lost, to less observant view, in the long drawn-in rags. As she rises Grace playfully keeps the miniature on a level with her eyes and, finally allowing herself to look, her good humored glance immediately dilates into one of surprise and great astonishment, as she turns and sinks into the nearest chair exclaiming,

"Lord in Heaven, if that ain't my own Miss Corona!"

CHAPTER X.

Let us roll back the chariot wheels of time for twenty-three years, and upon a dismal winter day, enter, uninvited, the stately mansion of Ferdinand De Costa, on — street, New York.

Its stern master, after an early breakfast that very morning, bade the butler say to Mrs. De Costa when she came down that he would be absent at least three weeks, going West upon business.

Corona after a sleepless night seated herself at her elegantly appointed table and leaning her cheek upon her hand in utter listlessness, thought,

"Another weary day and I have not seen my precious child for a week, having been denied admittance to the nursery. Is this to be my life? Oh! God, how can I endure it."

As the tears began to fall the old butler delivered his master's message. She suppressed a cry of joy, and the color came to her pale cheeks and a glad light shone in the sad eyes, as the quick thought came, "Three weeks with my little Grace, for I

know with that tyrant away Marie will not deny my coming to the nursery." She calmed herself with an effort, drank a cup of coffee, and hurried from the breakfast room, sped with swift feet up the polished staircase, crossed a side hall, down a long corridor with noiseless feet, and paused at a door from which she had many a day gone away with a heavy heart, Marie refusing to let her in.

With a beating heart she now stood, listening to the merry cooings and laughter of her child with whom the gentle nurse was frolicking. Unable to longer wait she rapped upon the door and impatiently cried out. "Open the door Marie!" A dead silence followed and as she repeated her demand, Marie moaned, "Oh, Mon Dieu, est ce vous, Madame, Mon Dieu, Mon Dieu, je ne puis pas ouvrir la porte pour vous, povere, chere, Madame, je ne puis pas."

"Marie open the door, vite, vite, Mr. De Costa is away for three weeks, three whole weeks."

The door flew open, and Corona stood with shining eyes. Her little child, now about a year and a half old, was standing alone, an achievement of which she was unaware. She caught her to her bosom and 'mid kisses and tears, gave vent to her pent-up mother love. She followed with delight the making of the little lady's toilette, she kissed her in the bath and out of it, she dressed her, gave her her little breakfast, then rocked her to sleep singing soft, low lullabys, every word of which was a *te deum* and a heartfelt hymn of praise to God for this blessed day.

She laid the child in her little white crib, and sat beside her and prayed for strength to bear her burden. She never left the nursery that day; and the day passed like a dream until the twilight fell.

Ferdinand De Costa had gone to his office that morning with the expectation of taking a train that would bear him West, almost beyond the confines of sundown, and to be away a much longer time than he had mentioned to his butler, when leaving the house, but a cablegram awaited his coming which opened up a matter of business

that brooked no delay and which could not be entrusted to anyone in his office, however competent the man might have been.

The day was passed with a great deal of anxiety and when business closed, greatly depressed in spirits and worn out bodily, he went to his home and entering with his latch key encountered no one and not wishing to answer any questions went directly to the drawing-room, passed to the rear and, pushing aside the curtains in front of a little nook, threw himself upon the couch in utter weariness.

The twilight was falling when he was aroused by the opening of a door and through the parting of the curtains he saw to his astonishment Geoffrey Mayhew walking down the room, until he stood opposite the couch on which he was lying—indeed he could have laid his hand upon him.

He recognized him as the betrothed of his wife and dark thoughts surged through his brain; but his instinct, bred of a life in Wall Street, clung to him, and he waited, with tingling nerves, what time should produce. Almost immediately his wife entered and came down the room with the air of a princess, her head erect, a glad smile upon her illumined face, and her eyes bright with unshed tears.

She extended her two hands and with a glad triumphant cry of "Oh! Geoffrey," she stood before him, their hands clasped but both speechless, simply gazing into each other's eyes with unspoken love.

"Corona, I have come to say farewell. I am going abroad to live—anywhere but in New York. I have come to-day as I go to the steamer that bears me away, never expecting to return to look into the face I have loved so long, and to ask you, Corona, in mercy to tell me why you so suddenly married, breaking our well-known engagement, and no word of dismissal or even explanation from you; for that you still love me I know full well."

Corona replied, "I am so glad that you have come to-day, the only day since that fatal one when I could have seen you, for, asking for me, the well instructed servants would not

have admitted you; but to-day, thank God, Mr. De Costa is far away for a three weeks' stay, and I breathe a breath of freedom. To answer your question, Mr. De Costa had been at our home one night, as he often was, with my father on business till a late hour and the words that passed between them were so exciting, so alarming, that my mother and I sat in her room just above my father's den, where their meetings always took place, with clasped hands in terror. At last, at two o'clock in the morning, the sounds ceased, the front door closed, my father came up the stairs and I fled to my own room with an indefinable presentiment of impending evil.

"The next morning my mother did not appear, and my father said, 'Corona, come to my den, I have something to say to you.' I followed him, we entered, he closed the door and turned the key.

"He took my hands, looked at me for a minute and said, 'Corona, do you love your father?' I said, 'You know I do.' 'Do you love him well enough to make a great sacrifice for him?' A swift thought of loss of money flew through my mind and I threw my arms around his neck and said, 'Oh! my dear father, ask anything of me, nothing shall be considered a sacrifice if it will be any help to you.' He said, 'My dear little girl, Mr. De Costa has asked your hand in marriage and I have given it.' I sprang from him as though a serpent had stung me and cried, 'Not that! not that! you do not mean what you say!' 'Yes'; he replied, 'I mean it, it must be, and one week from to-day. You never can know, my child, what has caused this, and if you love me, as I know you do, you will never ask either me or Mr. De Costa. And now my child go to your mother and if you love her make no opposition!' My mother's haggard face and swollen eyes told me what I need not ask, she only begged me for my father's sake to consent, which, you know, I did. The strain was so great upon my mother that she never left her bed that week and I was her constant attendant. One night while she slept

I wrote you begging you to come to me and gave it to a servant to mail, who had probably been instructed, and I now see what I then thought was your indignation to be the treachery of my father. I pass over my first personal interview with Mr. De Costa, in which I told him frankly that I did not and never could love him. The marriage with only my father and mother present occurred at the time mentioned and I was brought to this house, where I have been treated with the greatest cruelty, denied the care and love of my child."

"Corona, you love me. Flee from this house,—the carriage waiting to take me from you is at the door. Go with me, leave this wretch behind you."

Corona started back, "Oh! no, Geoffrey, I do not love my husband, I hate him, but I will not dishonor myself or bring shame upon my child. Go, Geoffrey, and carry with you my love." And he went.

Corona sank into a chair and burst into tears. Mr. De Costa opened the curtains and stepped out. Corona gave a horrified scream, and shrank in terror, for he, livid with anger, stood before her, and, controlling his voice, said, "Go to your room, madam." She fled, he following, and as she entered he locked the door and took the key, came down and left the house.

The next morning he entered her room. She was lying upon a couch, dressed as she had been the day before. He stood before her and said, "It is impossible for you to remain in this house. I should perhaps kill you, and I do not wish the shame of a divorce. To-morrow, at nine, a carriage will be at the door; you will take a steamer, after joining your mother, and go by the Mediterranean to Italy, where you will remain until such time as you are cabled to come home, and the world will understand that your health requires it. Your address will always be Brown Bros. in London, and an ample sum will be placed there for you quarterly. Marie has received directions from me, and she will arrange your departure. Upon reaching the steamer, you will be met by a woman, whom

I have engaged to be your companion, and in whose discretion I can rely to keep my name from dishonor. You will not leave this room," he added, "until you go down to your carriage." He gave her one long, crushing look, which she returned with her eyes on fire.

That night he paced the corridor until nearly morning, then went to his bed, and the ever faithful Marie laid little Grace, sleeping, in her heart-broken mother's arms for a long, perhaps a last embrace, and at nine in the morning Corona left the house.

Twenty-three weary years had passed, when one morning a cablegram was put in her hands, which read, "Corona, come home. Ferdinand De Costa."

We left her standing by the steamer's rail white with dread. What was she called home for? should she see her child? would De Costa's dreadful face appear? She clutched the rail, scarcely able to stand, when a man, whom she recognized as De Costa's lawyer, approached her and said,

"Mrs. De Costa, I bring you bad news. Mr. De Costa was found dead in his library yesterday morning."

CHAPTER XI.

The identity of the sender of the miniature remained for the present a mystery. John Gardner could elicit no information from the express office beyond the fact that the package had been despatched from New York, and the date of its receipt by the company.

As for Gardner himself, he found his only resource in the work that lay at his hand. He set about this with feverish eagerness, following his investigations night and day; seeming never to tire, hardly ever to pause, save for occasional visits of inquiry and sympathy at the door of the sick room. He believed that at last his investigations and experiments on Table Rock were to be rewarded with success.

On a convenient level spot, a few feet square and about half-way up the slope of the mountain, Gardner had constructed his rude miner's hut.

Here he kept his kit of tools, his little assortment of chemicals, for assaying after a rude fashion his specimens of rock, and a few simple cooking utensils. Here he took his rest, ate his lunch, boiled his tea or coffee; sometimes even, when he was hot upon the trail, and so stopped out over night, he would cook himself here a savory steak,—venison, moose, or bear,—a banquet fit for the gods;—and here, on an odorous bed of mountain fir and cedar boughs, drinking in the air like wine, he slept,—and slept, despite all anxiety and care, despite the pangs of love unavowed, uncertain of its object, such sleep as school-boys know, escaping to a summer camp deep in the pine woods, by some stream where trout abound. Thus the healthy body, that ensures the healthy mind, was kept in vigorous repair; for John Gardner knew that he must not fail or fall.

And then there came a day, a fateful day,—when, returning from the other side and over the crest of Table Rock; bearing pick-axe and shovel on his shoulder, and with his pockets filled, as usual, with specimens, he sought his hut, just as the shades of evening were coming on, to make, for the hundredth time, his experimental assays. He reached the hut, emptied his pockets of their load, brought out the chemicals, and went at it. For some time he worked, with knitted brow and every faculty concentrated on the task at hand; consulting frequently a paper containing formulæ that he had spread out before him, and making notes on a blank sheet, then comparing the one with the other. But it was not many minutes before his features began to betray an intense and increasing excitement, his hand to tremble so that he could hardly continue his notes; and then, at last, the great glow of an intense, unbounded joy burst forth,—the joy of the discoverer;—a new Columbus sighting a new world! Eureka! He had found it! The secret was there at last. For here was the rare formation, here was the wonderful blending of rocks and strata that was to be the geological promise of the fruition of the scientist's dream.

Of such was the rocky envelope, and folded deep within, at the very core and heart, unless all signs should fail, lay the precious matrix;—and its name was Karlium! That was the body, of which this should be the soul. "This very night, by moonlight,—for the moon is at the full,"—said John Gardner,—and his voice trembled with suppressed emotion,—“I shall try the experiment, make the supreme test. By this all is lost or all is won!”

It can be imagined with what impatience he awaited the hour. It crept on with stealthy pace; but at length it came. The night was glorious; the air crisp and still, and the moon hung like a burnished shield in the sky. With the precious flask in his pocket, pick-axe flung over his shoulder, revolver at his belt, stout walking-stick in hand, Gardner set forth; scrambling up the short, but steep, ascent, then across the mountain's crest, and along, skirting the edge on the opposite side, to the spot where he had collected a loose pile of stones, to serve as a landmark; then down the sheer rock's side by a zigzag course, until, just beneath the place where he had set his mark, he came to a peculiar-shaped knob or projection, that seemed to jut, or rather to exude, out of the mountain's side, and which to the eye appeared of a composition strikingly different from the surrounding country rock. It was of extremely complex texture and of almost every conceivable shade and color, from palest yellow to darkest violet and magenta, in irregular blotches, streaks, and markings. In places the structure was of a hard, dark, metallic sheen; in others, dull, light, and porous;—the most remarkable geological conglomerate, to all seeming, that ever the eye of scientist had rested upon. It almost looked as though Nature, in some fit of primeval jocosity, had been trying here her 'prentice hand at a practical joke.

Gardner stood for some moments, gazing at this amazing freak in almost amused wonderment, despite the excitement under which he was laboring, so keenly did he appreciate the joke. Then he passed around to the further side of the projecting knob,

where he had chipped off the specimens for his test, and was about to draw the flask from his pocket, when his eye was suddenly caught by a peculiar indentation in the ledge, a little to the right and below the projection. This he had failed to notice before, and he stopped now to examine it. Judge of his speechless amazement on discovering that the outer covering of rock had been chipped away, and that, it would appear, quite recently, over something like a square foot of the surface, to a depth of several inches, and that a circular hole, large enough to admit a man's hand, had been smoothly bored into the solid rock. He poked his walking-stick into this cavity, but could not reach the end of it. Neither did the stick encounter any obstacle; but,—and his pulse stopped beating and his heart rose in a lump to his throat as he instantly divined the significance of this fact!—the trend of the mysterious boring was in the direction of the projecting knob! Who, then, had been here before him? Was his marvellous discovery, after all, anticipated? Was the cup,—alas!—to be dashed from his lips? In the very flush of an anticipated triumph before whose lustre the rose-tinted dawn herself was like to pale, were all these splendid hopes to be brought to naught, utterly annihilated in the twinkling of an eye? Could a kind Heaven be so cruel?

By one supreme effort he pulled himself together. Any attempt to resolve this new mystery, of so dire a portent, must be deferred. There was only one thing for him to do, and that was the thing he had set out to do; he must apply the critical test to the rock and apply it quickly. And so he takes out the flask, unscrews the top, bends down over the rocky surface and, just over a dull violet streak of porous texture, he applies the secretly compounded liquid, drop by drop. Slowly it fell, slowly it sank into the greedy pores, until all was absorbed; and then John Gardner stood and waited,—waited with straining eyes and bated breath and fists tight-clenched and teeth firm-set,—waited,—was it minutes?—was it hours?—to him it seemed a century;—until

out of the breathless silence, out of untold distances, out of the very yearning bowels of the earth, there came, as it seemed, the tolling of a bell. And yet not that, but a dim and ghostly detonation; as though in the subterranean depths some piece of hobgoblin artillery had gone off by mistake, and its echoes had travelled upward, through the mellowing mines of virgin gold. Once! twice!—three times it sounded; and then all was still. All to the ear was still; but the watchful eye then caught the sign. For slowly, imperceptibly, there rose from out the porous rock, and then up, gradually, gently, up,—up towards the waiting moon,—not a mist, but the wraith of a mist,—not a cloud or vapor, but so fleecy and gauze-like a thing that nothing of earth, save a microbe, could have maintained footing upon it: so light and shadowy and aerial that the ghost of a departed joy could scarce have wrapped its folds about his form. And yet, though so ethereal, one felt at once that there was something mephitic and miasmatic about this shadowy nonentity. For its color was a pale and sickly green, and it seemed like unto the noisome vapors that rise from off the scum-covered surface of some dank tarn in an oozing swamp and curl and wind their way, with serpentine sinuosity, among the tangled juniper and thick undergrowth of noisome weeds, bearing fever and death-dealing pestilence in their wake. And then the breath of this wraith-like thing! How shall I describe it? What words can I find in the vocabulary of earth even to suggest that which, in its composite effect, had naught of earth about it, and yet whose components, if ever it could have been analyzed, seemed to suggest the most diverse ingredients of earth, air, and sea? Most strange and incomprehensible mixture! Surely no hash was ever offered to the palate so complex as this hash of odors! It had somewhat of sweetish, and somewhat of brackish; it had something of the intoxicating fragrance of lillies, and still more of the pungency of fried onions; it had a haunting presence and a lasting memory. It was one of those

smells that assail and carry the portals of the nostrils, and then sit down within to make their home there, evoking memories of lost lives and forgotten boarding-houses. John Gardner carries it with him still, and every morning he breathes the fervent prayer that the day of his deliverance may come.

The spell cast over him at the moment and on the spot of his discovery was long in passing; but gradually he was roused from the hypnotic state by the slow-dawning consciousness that the light of the moon had become darkened. Glancing up to ascertain the cause, he was startled to perceive, standing at the top of the cliff, the tall figure of a man, in a rough miner's cap and blouse, his long silver locks glinting in the moonshine, like burnished steel, with hand outstretched threateningly in Gardner's direction.

"Touch but your hand to that rock again," came the warning in a voice of thunder,—*"and this whole mountain-side will be blown into Hades!"* And then the figure turned and vanished.

John Gardner stood as if petrified, for he had recognized the Lone Fisherman of Bitter Creek!

CHAPTER XII.

Although a man with nerves of iron, which could withstand any ordinary shock, it must be confessed that John Gardner's thirst for the discovery of Karlium had received a most serious check. The threat made by the "Lone Fisherman" could not be disregarded by any sane man. So our hero reluctantly gathered together his tools, thrust into his pocket the flask, now emptied of its precious fluid, and, quietly descending the mountainside, made his way back to the hotel. He spent the remainder of the night wondering who this enemy might be, who had suddenly risen as from the bowels of the earth, and, above all, how much of the precious secret he knew. That the hoped-for discovery was in grave danger was beyond a doubt, and he turned over and over in his mind

plans by which this danger might be averted. He resolved that in the morning he would set about at once his investigation of the mystery.

But events were to happen that day, which should drive all thoughts of "Lone Fishermen" of discoveries of untold treasure from his mind for some time to come. He was, after all, not yet thirty, and very human, and love had been knocking at his heart, demanding entrance, ever since his eyes first rested upon the beautiful face of Grace De Costa. It was only by a superhuman effort that he had resisted the temptation to cast aside all obstacles, beat down all barriers, and go to the woman he loved, to claim her as his own and try to make her love him in return at all costs. Fortunately for the success of his wooing, there had been a barrier, and a most substantial one, in the shape of Grace's aunt, Mrs. Pettis. She had stood at the door of the sick-room, like the angel with the flaming sword before the gates of Paradise, barring the way. And every look and every tone of her voice, when she replied to his anxious inquiries, seemed to say,—*"So far shalt thou go and no farther!"* 'Tis small wonder that the poor fellow was discouraged and plunged into his investigations with renewed vigor, hoping in this way to still the longing of his heart and to divert his mind. But this obstacle was to be mercifully removed, and John Gardner was not the man to lose the opportunity thus gained to make hay while the sun shone.

Had he but known it, the prize was already more than half won; for with returning health had come to Grace a most overwhelming longing to see the handsome fellow who had so gallantly rescued her from death. The enforced separation had brought the flower of love into the bud, and it now needed but the warm touch of sunlight, which he alone could give, to burst into blossom.

Mrs. Pettis had received the night before most disturbing news from Ogden. The state meeting of the S. C. R. A. P., at which she was to have presided, had passed, and the vice-president had reigned in her

stead; but the annual convention at Washington was at hand, and, as president of her branch of the society, it was her duty as well as her pleasure to attend this convention. When she had received the news of Grace's accident she had bravely put aside all thought of going,—though it was of the utmost importance that she should be there to settle certain matters of dispute which had arisen among the members of the society and which could be adjusted only by appealing to the Congress at Washington. However, she had an alternate, in whom she placed implicit confidence, who would go in her place and who had promised to carry out her designs to the letter. Now the distracting news had come that this alternate had been stricken down with fever, and she must either go herself or give the business over into the hands of the second alternate, a person whose views on the subject differed radically from her own. Poor woman! What should she do? Grace was much better and the doctor had assured them that the next day she could be dressed and carried out on the broad piazza of the hotel. The faithful Phoebe was here to mount guard, and one could go to Washington, attend the convention, and be back inside of two weeks. Her one fear had been John Gardner and his possible passion for Grace, which she half suspected. But she had noticed that he seemed so absorbed in some mysterious business of late that her fears had been somewhat allayed.

"It is foolish of me," Mrs. Pettis said to herself, "to fancy that just because Mr. Gardner happened to be on the spot at the right moment to save Grace, he must necessarily follow the traditional lines of the hero of romance and fall in love with her. Both Grace and Phoebe urge me to go, and go I shall,—for this insurrection in our beloved society must be nipped in the bud at all costs of personal comfort and convenience!"

And go she did, taking the eleven o'clock train that morning for the East, escorted to the station by a most obsequious and gallant young gentleman by the name of Gardner,

in whose mouth, to use a somewhat vulgar expression, "butter would not melt." Had she witnessed the wild war-dance of joy indulged in by this same young gentleman upon his return to the hotel, in the secret recesses of his chamber, I fear she would have hastily alighted from the train at the next station and hurried back to her charge.

Even had she done so, she would hardly have been in time to avert the coming catastrophe; for Gardner was not one to let the grass grow under his feet, and almost as soon as her back was turned he was embracing both the opportunity and the girl.

On his way to the noon-day dinner,—a custom still in vogue at Bitter Creek,—he was waylaid, coming down stairs, by Phoebe, who inquired if he could and would assist them in bringing Grace onto the piazza after dinner. He most certainly could and would, and the poor fellow was so excited at the mere prospect of such joy that he could not do justice, as was his wont, to the remarkably good fare served by Mrs. Lynch. This fact was noticed by that good woman, as dish after dish came back untasted to the kitchen; causing her to remark to the under-cook:—"Arrah! arrah! the bye must be sick or in love! Divil the time did I see him go off his feed til the day!" Which shows that this worthy person added penetration to her many virtues.

Later, when the entire force in the hotel was called upon to assist in escorting Miss De Costa out to the piazza and installing her comfortably in a steamer-chair on the shady side, Mrs. Lynch had a chance to exercise this virtue once again. She was so impressed by the look of rapture and devotion in John Gardner's face, as he tenderly carried Grace in his arms, that her soft Irish heart melted within her, and she then and there resolved to work for him and in his cause. So in a few moments she called Phoebe to her and kept her at work, as well as all the other servants in the hotel. She told Phoebe that no one but herself could put in order the room in which Miss De Costa had been ill so

long, and she kept her there and would not let her go until everything shone as if new, from the scrubbing and polishing given by Phoebe.

Thus the blissful hours alone with Grace were given John Gardner for which he had longed, but hardly dared hope; and he never knew to whom he owed this blessing. The shady side of the piazza was enveloped in trees, which hid it from the high-road, and there John Gardner told his love—that story which is ever new. He followed his instinct and found the direct road to a woman's heart—which is always impetuosity, with no thought of time or place or the future.

I know the modern novelist is apt to make the woman do more than half the wooing, and I consider it one of the sure signs of the degeneracy of the times, which I trust our reader deplores as much as does the writer. But in this case it was good old-fashioned love-making, and while Grace was not the drooping, half-hearted heroine of the olden time, still neither was she the bold-faced chit of the present day, according to modern fiction. She was too carried away by the storm of impassioned words of love, longing, and entreaty, which came from Gardner's very heart, to make much response in words. But when he clasped her, unresisting, to him, and kissed her upon the lips, her responsive kiss told the whole story, and the simple words, "I love you too, John," quite satisfied him.

When Phoebe returned an hour later, full of remorse and apology for her prolonged absence, she was amazed and alarmed at the soft glow, as of returning health, and the bright light in the eyes of the beautiful girl. She feared fever and hustled Grace into the house, so that love passages were over for that day. To be together in the same room, however, was happiness for both, and the early bed-time, which brought separation, came all too soon.

By all known rules of law and order John Gardner should have passed a restless night; but, far from it, feeling that he had accomplished the supreme act of his life and with only happy longings for the future, he fell into a blissful sleep, which lasted until

he was awakened by the rising-bell, which always rang in "The Great Western Hotel" at the witching hour of six.

So the golden days passed, every one in the hotel realizing perfectly the state of affairs and all rejoicing over it, and Phoebe above all, for she saw the blessed change in her beautiful charge, and, realizing that love is the greatest of all physicians, she put no stumbling block in their path. If the truth must be confessed, the thought of the horror and chagrin she believed would be felt by Mrs. Pettis, when she learned the truth, caused Phoebe great satisfaction, and she and Mrs. Lynch chuckled and laughed over it many times.

Meanwhile Grace had received two letters from her aunt. She wrote that all had not gone as she could have wished. It was strange that when she faced the Congress at Washington she found herself of but little importance. And she could not, try as she might, bring them to her way of thinking; as she could so easily the good women of her society in Ogden, who would follow her like sheep jumping over a gate. However, she had done all she could, and the convention was over, and she was on her way back—a sadder, but a wiser woman—and would be with her darling Grace the next morning if all went well. Grace read this last piece of information to John with a sinking heart. She did not feel that her aunt could make any real objection to the match, or her father either, for that matter; but they both felt that the return of Mrs. Pettis would bring to an end this beautiful dream in which they had been living, and they knew it could never come again, though it should be followed, as they both hoped and believed, by a long and happy life spent together.

After supper that evening they wandered out together towards Table Rock; for Grace was quite strong again, and John had told her of the wonderful discovery he felt sure he was upon the eve of making. He had not told her of the apparition of the "Lone Fisherman," for fear of alarming her needlessly, and she was anxious to see the place where he had been at work before her aunt should return and possibly prevent these nightly strolls.

They never knew how near death came to them that night; for as they rounded the last curve in the ledge on the mountainside, a dark face gazed at them with a look of unutterable hate from beneath the knob of remarkable rock they had come to examine. But the hand outstretched trembled and faltered, for human nature was too strong, and one look into the happy, beautiful face of John's companion had been enough. With a muttered curse the hidden figure stole silently away, and they were left unmolested to their investigations and their blissful dream of love.

The next day, with a brave face but a quaking heart, Gardner went to the station to meet Mrs. Pettis. Grace's last words as she bade him adieu, "Don't worry, John, dear, I will fix it all right with Aunty; just leave it to me,"—gave him some small degree of courage. Polite generalities only were indulged in until they reached the hotel, and John watched Mrs. Pettis disappear into Grace's room with a sinking heart.

He paced restlessly up and down the hall outside for an hour; then Grace's face appeared at the door, smiling and happy, and there was a triumphant ring in her voice as she cried—"John, dear, come here and kiss your new aunt!" What arguments Grace had used to plead their cause John never knew. It was happiness enough to be warmly welcomed by Mrs. Pettis, and to be told that he was a "saucy boy" to steal a march on her while she was away; but that she hoped he realized what a treasure he had won, and would try to be worthy of her. These last sentiments were most heartily and humbly echoed by Gardner, and they at once plunged into plans for the immediate hegira to Ogden—to which metropolitan center of activity Mrs. Pettis was most anxious to return as soon as possible.

Poor Mrs. Lynch and Phoebe were amazed and, it must be confessed, disappointed at the smiling graciousness displayed by Mrs. Pettis to all beholders. But they had little time for wonder and speculation, for the next few hours were filled with the bustle of preparation for departure, in which all joined.

Grace had arranged with Phoebe sometime before that she should go with her as lady's maid, which position she was only too glad to fill for the beautiful daughter of her former beloved mistress; and while Mrs. Lynch was sorry to lose her, she could but rejoice at Phoebe's good fortune.

John longed most ardently to go with them to Ogden, but he realized that it was his duty to stay at Bitter Creek finish his investigations, and solve the mystery of the "Lone Fisherman", if possible.

"In a little while I shall be with you again, darling," he whispered tenderly as he held Grace in his arms for the last time. "I know you will be brave for my sake." And Grace tried with all her strength to smile through the mist of tears which blinded her eyes as the train moved out of the station, and she looked back at the tall graceful figure of her lover, as he stood bareheaded in the sunshine waving his good-bye, and flanked by the entire population of Bitter Creek, which had come en masse to wish them God-speed!

CHAPTER XIII.

We left Corona De Costa standing upon the steamer's deck clutching the rail and simply staring with wide-open eyes and a face from which every particle of color had fled, into that of the old lawyer, who had spoken those fearful words. She opened her dry lips as though to speak, but no sound came forth.

"Mrs. De Costa," Mr. Harris said, "your carriage is waiting,—allow me to conduct you," and he placed her limp arm within his own and walked down the bridge. Corona turned her head and gave to Mayhew a mute pleading look and he followed. Having placed her in the carriage, Mr. Harris returned to the steamer. The hands of these two people met in a firm clasp and Corona said, "Send me your address and come when I send for you." A pressure of the hand, eye meeting eye, and he was gone.

Mr. Harris soon returned, entered the carriage and seating himself opposite its occupant, sat for a few

minutes in silence, then said, "Mrs. De Costa, it may remove restraint and prevent some embarrassment if I tell you frankly that I had Mr. De Costa's entire confidence, not only in a business way but in his domestic matters as well. You will pardon me, but I knew of your leaving home and why you went," (a vivid flush sprang to the cheek of his listener.) "In fact I made all the arrangements for your hurried departure—and you will allow me to add that you had my deepest sympathy. Mr. De Costa often talked with me upon the subject and the absolute correctness of your life abroad softened his heart, and as old age crept on and a feeling of loneliness encompassed him, his daughter being away at school, and having few friends, he began, at rare moments, to express his regret at the course he had pursued, freely saying that it was a spirit of revenge, born of jealousy that his beautiful young wife had told him that she did not, and never could, love him, that her heart was irrevocably given to another.

"About three weeks ago he came to my private office greatly depressed in spirit and spoke very freely of his ruined life, saying that had he treated his wife as he ought to have done, she would in time have learned to love him, that their child would have drawn them together; instead of that he said, pacing the floor, he had kept the child away from the young mother, outraging every womanly, motherly instinct and depriving his little daughter of that for which there was no compensation,—a mother's love and tender care. His obsequious servants, under his instructions, turned away from the door the few people that she knew and if she went out a footman was instructed to follow, which at once had the desired effect of keeping her in. The poor girl might as well have been a prisoner in the castle of Chillon—no wonder her broken heart turned to one who loved her and so intensely, so devotedly, that life to him had been a failure, and even in that last interview when she had so firmly repulsed him and so nobly defended her husband's honor, in refusing to flee from her life of misery.

Then standing in front of me, this hard, proud man, with the tears stealing down his cheeks, asked me if I thought it was too late. Could it be possible that such conduct might be forgiven and atoned for by the devotion of what was left of life? I could not answer the question, but I said to myself, 'an angel might, but the average woman'—I said she may come home to her daughter. He paced the room with bent head, then went over to my desk and wrote the cablegram, which you received and when in a few hours your reply came, stating the vessel upon which you would sail, Mr. De Costa was another man and he began with feverish anxiety to set his house in order. The furniture and the rugs were getting shabby, he said, and he would have new and the best. Upon your room he lavished all that his exquisite taste could suggest to make it beautiful.

"He had been in Europe several times during the last twenty years, spending weeks at a time within sight of your residence—wishing to go to you, but held back by the demon of pride. In Florence he found, at a photographer's, a miniature of you, which he recently sent to his daughter."

Corona was sitting with the tears falling upon her clasped hands; now for the first time she spoke, eagerly asking, "Oh, where is my daughter, tell me!"

"She is in Ogden, Utah, on a visit to her aunt, Mrs. Pettis, and I only await your orders to summon her home."

"I beg of you to wire quickly, only telling her that her father is ill."

Mr. Harris continued, "There is a young man, a Mr. Gardner, at Bitter Creek, a few miles from Ogden, who was sent out by a friend of Mr. De Costa's upon some expert mining business, and he must be called home now. I will wire him, with your consent, to go to Ogden and bring Miss Grace to New York."

Corona bowed her head in acquiescence. Mr. Harris further said, "He caused me to draw up a will giving you during your lifetime the use of

his large fortune; at your death the property becomes his daughter's."

"You told me Mr. De Costa was found dead—in bed I presume?"

"No, in the library."

"Was it heart trouble?"

"It was not decided what caused his death," Mr. Harris replied, and added, "Here we are," as the carriage drew up to the curb.

The footman opened the door, and leaning heavily upon the arm of her companion Mrs. De Costa with bowed head went up the broad steps of granite, and entered her home. The dim lights, the suppressed voices, the noiseless footsteps tell that the King of Terrors has entered that household and that one lies prone, and shall lie 'till the arch-angel's trump shall sound.

Although this sad woman had come to her very own, she stood in the foyer as a stranger, not knowing where to go, when there came rapidly from the rear a tall, dignified, white-haired lady, whom she instantly recognized as the housekeeper, who had been very kind to her and in many unspoken ways had shown her sympathy. As she came near, she held out her two arms and gathered Corona to her heart, drew the sobbing woman into her own room and petted and comforted her as a mother might a sorrowing child. When her tears were spent and she had become calm, Mrs. Newton suggested her going to her own room. Every step of the way was as a dagger thrust, so well did she remember that last night of agony, when for a few hours her sleeping babe had lain in her bosom, and she had gone out of that room as Hagar was thrust into the wilderness, only the happy Hagar had her little Ishmael with her; and she stopped at the door unable to enter until gently urged by a touch of Mrs. Newton's hand. She gazed speechless at the elegance which had been provided for her home coming, and she murmured "Too late, too late!" Then raising her eyes and turning toward the mantel she saw, in the place of honor, the portrait in oils—in fact one of Sargent's latest—of a beautiful girl. She turned to Mrs. Newton, but she had gone. She clasp-

ed her hands and gazed as though she would take the picture in her arms, and with a flood of tears cried, "My child, my child, my beautiful Grace, come to me!" and sinking into a chair she still looked at the face which smiled at her, the eyes following her, and murmuring sweet words of love and motherly tenderness, 'till she was aroused by the entrance of a maid with a tray of refreshment, of which she was in great need.

Following this came a summons to go down to meet Mr. Harris. A long conversation followed in which her wishes were consulted with regard to the arrangements for the funeral of Mr. De Costa, it being decided that this should not occur until Grace should have come home. He asked if there was anything else he could do for her. A gentle shake of the head was her reply. He now asked if she would like to see Mr. De Costa. She arose to her feet, every vestige of color leaving her face. Mr. Harris offered his arm, which she took, and they slowly walked down the long drawing-room, through the library and into Mr. De Costa's study. Mr. Harris quietly turned down the covering from the form lying upon the couch and left the room.

Corona remained standing near the door. A feeling as though a hand was clutching her heart held her gasping for breath, and it seemed as though she had been in a dream and the old life with all its tyranny was upon her. But her strong womanly nature asserted itself and she moved forward and stood beside and looked down upon that face, so calm, so still, so peaceful. She gazed long and a feeling of remorse came that she had hated that helpless man, so powerless now to injure her, and she shuddered as she thought how many times she had wished him dead. She laid her warm hand upon his brow and exclaimed, "O, Ferdinand, my husband, my poor husband, is it thus we meet after twenty weary cruel years, every day of which has left a blister spot upon my memory? You took my young life into your hands. You promised before God at the altar to love and cherish me. Did you do it? From

day to day you trampled upon every instinct that a woman holds dear; with a refinement of cruelty you kept my little baby in the hands of hirelings and away from me; you denied visitors to the house through your well trained servants; my father through you became a wanderer upon the face of the earth; my mother died of a broken heart, and what have you to say—why do you not answer me?"

She turned away and paced the room sobbing bitterly. When this paroxysm of grief and anger had passed, she returned to the couch and taking his cold hand in both of hers said, "Forgive me, my husband, I too was to blame. I should have arisen in womanly might and demanded different treatment, demanded my right as the head of my house, and the control and care of my child—but Oh! my youth and inexperience! I was but a child and as clay in your hands. Looking back through the mists of years, I can see it all—those dreary days and sleepless nights. And you have tried, my husband, with tears of repentance, to right the wrong, but you had sown the wind and must reap the whirlwind. I forgive you as I hope to be forgiven. Good-night, dear," and she kissed the cold lips and went to her room.

Our last glimpse of Grace De Costa was as she leaned from the car window to wave her hand to her handsome lover, standing upon the platform of Bitter Creek station. A short ride brought them to Ogden, where Mrs. Pettis's daughters were at the station awaiting their arrival, and with ill-concealed curiosity they examined their new-found cousin. After a few words had been spoken, and they had silently inventoried her costume, their tones became respectful, the half-suppressed smile left their lips and their eyes said to each other, "She is better than we expected."

After a night's rest the full tide of calls, receptions, and teas set in and Grace was fairly launched into a social whirl the like of which she had never known, and she was happy, the admired of all admirers, and not par-

ticularly loved by Mrs. Pettis's plainer though literary daughters.

At the close of three weeks of social dissipation, just after dinner one night, John Gardner appeared. He was courteously received by Mrs. Pettis and rapturously by Grace. Almost at once he told his story. Mr. De Costa was ill, not seriously, but he was wired home on a matter of business and directed by Mr. Harris, whom Grace had known from a child, to bring her home, sparing no pains to make her comfortable, and he had wired that they would take the early morning train. All was now bustle and confusion; trunks were packed, and Phoebe, nothing loth, was asked to go with her. When in the dim morning light the train had passed out of sight, Mrs. Pettis told her family the real truth, that her brother had been murdered—it was not known by whom—and that Grace was to be kept in ignorance of the fact as long as possible; and she directed the cancelling of all their engagements, which brought tears to the eyes of the daughters.

The train paused a minute at Bitter Creek station and passed on. Grace has the little stateroom at the end of the car and by her side sits Gardner, Phoebe occupying his seat in the car. The couple in the little stateroom are too happy to see the black shadow before them. She assures John that she is so glad Mr. Harris thought what a safe way it was to take her home, for she can be four days with her dear John, and she gives his hand a little squeeze, at the same time saying that papa often had those ill turns, and often in a few days he came around all right; probably he was lonesome, poor old papa. She would be glad to see him; she had never been so long away from him, and she wanted to show him her boy, her sweetheart, who had saved her life,—and here followed demonstrations.

And thus the days flew by and when the fourth had passed the long train drew into the Grand Central station in New York. The carriage, with Mr. Harris, was waiting. He met John cordially, making an appoint-

ment with him for that evening. John pressed the little hand put out of the carriage window and said good-night.

They reached the house and Grace flew up the steps, but stopped short, as though a blow had been given her, at the sight of the black crepe pendant from the doorknob. She was taken to the housekeeper's room, where her grief was pitiable to behold. After a while Mrs. Newton said, "Miss Grace, my dear, you have lost your father but you have found your mother."

Grace caught her breath, and said, "What do you mean? I know that I have her picture, which some one sent me, but that is not my mother, my poor, dear mother."

"No," Mrs. Newton replied, "but your real live mother is in this house, waiting to see her daughter."

Grace sprang to her feet and with a fervent, "Thank God," caught Mrs. Newton's hand and said, "O, be quick, I can not wait, take me to her."

They went to Corona's room, knocked at the door and a faint voice bade them enter. Corona was standing, a bright flush upon her cheek and a glad light in her eye. She wore a long trailing gown of some soft clinging black stuff and was supremely beautiful. Grace stood for a minute as though transfixed, but her mother opened her arms and Grace rushed into them. Mrs. Newton had gone down stairs.

The private funeral is over, and the house is settling down to as great a degree of quiet as can be where such a tragedy has been enacted. As yet no clue has been obtained leading to the detection of whoever committed the crime. John Gardner has been received as the fiancée of Mrs. De Costa's daughter. Geoffrey Mayhew is also received, and is a new man, with a light in his eye and a ring in his voice, and in a year and a half from now Corona will keep the promise she made so many years ago when life was young.

CHAPTER XIV.

Attached to the Golden Gate express, flying westward over the Union Pacific on the 16th day of June, 1903, was the private car "Muriel", dedicated to the uses of Mr. James Morley, chairman of the board of directors.

The occupants of the car were Mr. Morley himself, his private secretary Harry Walton; Duncan Stewart, present head of the house of F. De Costa & Co., executor of the late senior partner's will and trustee for his daughter and heiress; Paul Raymond, the well-known chemist and metallurgist; Herr Max Karl, honorary professor of chemistry in the University of Berlin and recently arrived in New York; Mr. Grigson, the famous detective; and Dr. Logan Raymond, younger brother of Paul, and one of the most eminent brain and nerve specialists of his day.

Some little explanation will be necessary to place the reader or listener in possession of the facts and circumstances which had brought this company together as fellow travellers in the "Muriel".

After the tragic and mysterious death of Ferdinand De Costa it appeared in the examination of his papers and affairs that he held the title deeds to large tracts of territory surrounding in all directions the railway station and village of Bitter Creek, Wyoming. These lands had all been acquired by purchase and conveyance from their former owners within a period of about two years preceding Mr. De Costa's death. In some of these deeds the consideration mentioned as payment was merely nominal; in others it was of such moderate amount, compared with the acreage conveyed, as to indicate that the land must be barren or unimproved and of small apparent value.

Nothing was found among the dead banker's papers to explain these purchases, and nothing was known concerning them by any of his business associates. But from various small circumstances, such as the careful manner in which the deeds were kept among his most valuable securities, it was apparent that he considered them of importance; and with them was found a document carefully drawn up by

NOTICE.

By an error in printing, pages 51 and 52 are transposed. In reading pass from page 50 to 52—52 to 51 and 51 to 53.

marvellous mechanism was broken or displaced. Her mind, so far as its mutual inter-relations with the minds of her fellow beings was concerned, was gone. Sweet and gentle to a degree most pathetic and heart-breaking to those who loved her; seeming to receive into her consciousness, in some way, at least a partial understanding of communications addressed to her, she was, beyond this, not only absolutely cut off from all fellowship with other personalities but utterly and serenely unconscious of their existence.

Her physical organization was, so far as could be determined, in perfect condition. The sight of the beautiful violet eyes was unimpaired. Her movements were free and natural, and were ordered with sweet and gentle acquiescence in any suggestions made by her attendants. In moving about she avoided contact with material objects, not in that evidently instinctive way peculiar to the blind, but plainly by the use of normal vision. And yet there was not the slightest indication that she actually saw, as those in ordinary condition see, any person or object that was visible to those about her. Her eyes, gentle and steady, seemed to gaze calmly through all material objects within the range of ordinary vision, and rest upon things so far distant as to be entirely beyond its limits.

She spoke little, and never once had she addressed a word to any person, or betrayed in any way the slightest consciousness of the presence or existence of any living person or material object. In body she was a living, lovely presence; in spirit and mind she dwelt in another sphere of existence, far beyond the confines of this world.

To all appearance she was perfectly happy. No shadow of sorrow or sadness ever clouded her lovely face, and in her eyes dwelt the softened sunlight of perfect peace. At irregular intervals of a few days, she would pass into a peaceful slumber, lasting from twenty to forty hours, remaining for this period absolutely motionless except for the quiet, regular action of the heart, the gentlerhythmicbreathingof healthful sleep, and the occasional flitting across her perfect lips of a

smile as light as the kiss of a summer zephyr.

Of course every known resource of science had been invoked—and exhausted—in the case. In this particular field Dr. Logan Raymond was recognized as the ultimate authority, and he had given to it every resource of his rare scientific attainments and still rarer intellectual and intuitive skill; for not only was he deeply interested in the case from a professional point of view, but he had known Grace De Costa from childhood and her sweet and beautiful personality was as dear to him as if she had been his own daughter.

But every effort of human skill was utterly in vain. and Doctor Raymond, like his fellow specialists, was forced to admit the helplessness of science. There was nothing to be done but wait upon the wisdom and mercy of a higher power. And with sad reluctance he was forced to admit that so far as any precedent or scientific research could be said to throw light upon the case there was, humanly speaking, no ground for hope. All the probabilities seemed to indicate that no improvement could be looked for and that finally—how near or how distant the day no human wisdom could foretell—there would come a change for the worse, and this pure, sweet young soul would take its flight into the realms beyond, where even now its higher faculties seemed to dwell.

If any shadow of hope remained it must be in the direction of complete change of place and environment, on the chance that some new scene or circumstance might recall the wandering spirit and mend the broken link. In this view, he decidedly approved the suggestion that Grace should be taken for a time to her aunt in Ogden, and from thence in such directions as might seem advisable. Accordingly she had taken the journey a few weeks previous, accompanied by her mother and faithful Phoebe and under the escort of her broken-hearted lover John Gardner, of whose existence the stricken girl was now as completely oblivious as of all others in this world.

Gardner had not accomplished very much in the business which took him to Bitter Creek while Grace remained

Mr. De Costa's own hand, setting forth that he held the titles to all these Wyoming lands in trust for the equal and joint interest of himself and "my old friend the Herr Professor Max Karl of Berlin, Germany."

Mr. Stewart, as executor of his late partner's estate, in due course despatched an agent to Wyoming to examine into the character and value of these properties. The agent reported that they all appeared to consist of barren tracts of rock, including a small mountain known as "Table Rock," and several other hills or mountains, some smaller and some larger, but all equally uninviting and apparently worthless.

But another feature of the agent's report was more interesting: His investigation disclosed the fact that a number of claims under the mining laws had been filed and staked on these properties since their purchase by Mr. De Costa, that some of the titles were uncertain, and that the rights of claimants or possible claimants to these, as well as some adjacent tracts not covered by the De Costa purchases, had recently been acquired in the names of James Morley, Paul Raymond, John Gardner, and some other persons known to be connected with the Morley financial interests.

The result of these discoveries was a conference between James Morley and Duncan Stewart, whose relations had been close and cordial, both personally and in business matters for years past, and an agreement to submit the whole matter to the joint examination of their confidential counsel, with a view to some amicable adjustment of the conflicting claims and interests.

These legal luminaries reported in due time that only two courses were open:—an amalgamation of the various titles, claims, and interests, or long and tedious, even though friendly litigation, in order to obtain a judicial determination of the rights of the various parties such as would set at rest all questions of title. And what the exact results would be they did not care to predict with certainty.

Morley and Stewart promptly agreed upon the first-named alternative as

best for all concerned, and it was arranged to form a corporation which should take over all the various claims and titles, and the stock of which should be distributed among those in interest according to their equitable rights.

All that remained to be done was to secure the approval of Professor Karl to this plan. A cablegram was despatched urgently requesting his presence in New York, in response to which he had recently arrived, given his cordial assent to the arrangement proposed, and in the course of proceedings a strong mutual regard and friendship had been established between the German scientist and his present travelling companions.

The awful shock of her father's death, the gradual revelation to her of the strange and inexplicable circumstances of his cruel murder, the sudden and unexpected return into her life of the mother who had been since childhood but a cherished dream—all these heavy drafts upon her emotions, coming so soon after her disquieting experience at Bitter Creek, her accidental injury there and the deep stirring of her heart by new and complicated sensibilities called into action by her love for John Gardner had no doubt rendered her less able than usual to meet them—proved too much for Grace De Costa's strength. For some days she kept up as all thought most wonderfully, but it was on the stimulus of excitement, and one morning she was found delirious, recognizing neither her mother nor Phoebe. From that moment these two shared in most devoted and loving care of the patient so dear to both.

For a time there was but little hope of averting brain fever, but finally her young and vigorous health asserted its underlying power and one morning she awoke after a deep sleep lasting nearly thirty hours, with normal pulse and temperature and every physical symptom indicating that the crisis had been safely passed. From that moment her progress was rapid and in a surprisingly short time she had fully regained her normal health, strength, and beauty.

But somewhere, alas, a link in the

there after her accident in September. Although it is much to be feared that at this time he would have counted any service he could render her first in importance, there was really not much that he could do, after the first, and he conscientiously devoted a very full measure of his time to the search for Karlum.

He had built a hunter's cabin on Table Rock, and from this as a base he had gone forth to adventures and discoveries remarkable, weird, and malodorous; and, just as the treasure was within his grasp had been confronted and thwarted, like the seekers after Captain Kidd's buried and goblin-guarded gold, by a confounding apparition in the likeness of the fisherman of the canyon. But, fortunately or otherwise, as may be, all these things were and happened while he was asleep. What with his anxiety about Grace's health, about the prospects of his now serious and rapidly growing love for her, and the nerve strain that always comes from a continuous search for something, Gardner's slumbers at this time were generously illustrated with dreams.

In point of fact and in his waking hours, he had really accomplished but little except in the way of elimination. He covered and disposed of a good deal of territory where Karlum was not to be found, and narrowed the search down pretty well to Table Rock Hill and its immediate vicinity; and after Grace went to Ogden he assisted a lawyer sent on from New York at his suggestion in locating claims and titles, but in this business had never chanced to discover any traces of Mr. De Costa's interests there, as no conveyances in his name had been recorded.

After the tragedy and return to New York the winter season soon coming on had of course precluded further work in Wyoming, even had Gardner been willing to go so far away from Grace, in her sad condition, so matters rested until he accompanied her back to Ogden in May. Then he returned to Bitter Creek, where he plunged into a continuance of his search and research with the intense energy of one who in utter despair turns to hard

work and bodily fatigue as the only balm for such grievous hurts as he had suffered.

On June 12th, four days before the opening of this chapter, Paul Raymond received a telegram in cipher, which being translated read as follows:

"Have made astounding discoveries, of such character and importance that I do not feel like going further alone. Think parties interested, or full representation of them, should come here at once.

"John Gardner."

A hurried conference was held and as it transpired that Mr. Morley was planning to leave two days later to attend an important railway meeting in San Francisco, it was promptly decided that he would hasten his departure, allowing for a stop at Bitter Creek, and that Professor Karl, Duncan Stewart, and Paul Raymond should accompany him.

On a second reading of the telegram Mr. Morley despatched his secretary with certain instructions the result of which was the addition to the party of Grigson the detective. And Paul Raymond paid a hurried visit to his brother, whose anxiety and affection for Grace De Costa persuaded him to lay aside everything else and embrace the proffered opportunity to see again his interesting patient.

All arrangements were perfected with that smooth celerity peculiar to the affairs of financial and railway magnates and within four hours from the receipt of Gardner's telegram the answer flashed back over the wires:—

"We leave at 10:30 to-night on the Chicago limited."

Some of Morley's numerous business interests had demanded a few hours' stop in Chicago, and now, on the afternoon of the third day, the "Muriel" was flying smoothly westward through the picturesque scenery of southeastern Wyoming. At every station of importance sheaves of telegrams were handed into the car for Mr. Morley, and he was occupied with his secretary in disposing of the last batch; Paul Raymond and Duncan Stewart were giving their attention to the scenery and a desultory conversation,

and Grigson was refreshing his mind with an intricate game of solitaire, with his back to one corner of the room, so that no interesting development in the art of crime which might unexpectedly come up should escape him.

Professor Karl and Doctor Raymond had, from the beginning of the journey, been very much interested in each other and much of the time absorbed in scientific discussions. The German scientist had by no means confined his studies or attainments to chemistry, but with the thoroughness characteristic of his race had gone far and deep into the problems of the human mechanism. Personally he was a typical and striking figure. Of about the medium height, with a strong "stocky" figure, his appearance was impressive by reason of the great head with its leonine shock of thick bushy hair, and the unusually brilliant eyes, dark hazel in color, which, although he wore short-sighted glasses, seemed to light up the rather heavy but distinctly intellectual features like electric lamps.

These two men were seated in easy chairs near the end of the "Muriel's" drawing room, and Doctor Raymond had been describing with all the detail of a close diagnosis the sad and remarkable case of Grace De Costa. The German had listened throughout with intense interest, occasionally interpolating a question, and as the description neared scientific completion his wonderful eyes fairly blazed with excitement until, as Doctor Raymond finished, forgetting his English entirely, with a quick, explosive "*Komme her!*" he seized him by the lapel of his coat, dragged him to one of the private compartments and closed the door—all with such excited emphasis that Grigson would no doubt have entertained hopes of business in his line, had he not learned something of German impulsiveness and vigor in expression from previous experience.

When they emerged, half an hour later, Doctor Raymond looked rather pale, and his face wore the expression of one who has received some very startling intelligence which he has not yet fully assimilated; and the Herr

Professor's eyes were still shining with excitement, while his lips were set in a positive line, expressive of masterful confidence. Both men forthwith betook themselves to the weed which at once aids and quiets reflection; and absorbed in thought and smoke spake no further word until Rawlins had been left well behind and the porters had begun to collect baggage and personal belongings for the journey's end.

Bitter Creek was reached on time, and John Gardner was waiting at the station to receive them. The "Muriel" was sent on, with its crew, to Ogden to await the further orders of the magnate, and the party made their way to "The Great Western Hotel," where arrangements for their comfort had been made by Gardner. After a most excellent supper prepared by Mrs. Lynch and her satellites had been discussed and appreciated, followed by a short walk about the small village, the party met in the parlor of the hotel to listen to Gardner's report of his progress and the unexpected discoveries which had led to his telegram. With scientific terms eliminated, and stated as briefly as possible, this report was in substance as follows:—

Since his return to Bitter Creek this time he had continued his investigation on practically the same lines as before, taking careful surveys and observations to determine the trend of the geological strata of the vicinity, and applying Raymond's acid test to locate traces of the mineral Karlium. As Table Rock Hill and its immediate vicinity seemed to yield the most promising results, he had concentrated his efforts here to a large extent.

From the length of time required to obtain a reaction from the combined acids, and from other indications, he had become convinced that the deposits of Karlium were uniformly found in the lower portion of the rock formation. This rule held good whether the reaction was obtained in ledge formation or detached boulders; and the inference from it was either that the mineral had been deposited by some force from beneath, like volcanic action, or else that by

reason of gravity or some other natural law it had made its way downward from the surface, no doubt when the rock was in a liquid or semi-liquid state.

In following up this idea, he had been interested to find out something which owing to the peculiar formation was often difficult to determine—namely whether what appeared to be boulders were in reality such, being wholly detached from the parent ledge, or boulders in appearance only and still joined beneath to the underlying rock. With this view he had been one day, about a week previous, probing between some boulders which had responded to the acid test, with a slender steel bar—when suddenly the bar slipped from his hands and disappeared. Much surprised, as he had noticed no sign of an opening, he retained the presence of mind to listen intently and heard the bar strike upon a rock surface somewhere below. From the time of the drop, the sound of its striking on end then falling down, and the reverberation, the astonishing fact seemed almost certainly established that it had dropped into a subterranean cavern in the interior of Table Rock Hill, not less than fifteen or twenty feet in depth and of considerable size!

Carefully marking the spot he proceeded to follow out from it lines in different directions, in the hope of finding some opening or indication that would afford a key to the mystery. In every direction but one the quest was vain and unpromising, the lines simply leading among the rocks on a barren level, or tending upward to higher elevations. Following a line about due west, however, for a distance of some forty yards, he came to a sudden drop, the face of the ledge dropping down almost perpendicularly about fifty feet; and directly beneath as he looked over the edge stood a rough cottage, the rear wall of which was built plumply against the face of the perpendicular ledge. A comparatively level space of perhaps a quarter acre surrounded this cottage on its other sides, and then there was another abrupt drop of about twenty feet, forming the side of the canyon, with Bitter Creek at the bottom.

He also noticed that from his viewpoint, looking diagonally about thirty rods to the left, he could see the mass of shifting sand which had interested and puzzled him so much, its further edge just touching the water of the creek.

The cottage he had seen before and had learned that it was occupied by a man of middle age and ordinary appearance whom he had seen occasionally about the village, and whom he had first noticed fishing in the canyon on the day of Grace De Costa's unintentional arrival in Bitter Creek.

Making his way down by a considerable detour, he noted no signs of occupancy and could get no response to repeated knocking on the door or loud calls. Finally he tried the door and finding it unfastened entered the cottage. Everything was undisturbed and looked as if the occupants had stepped out expecting to return at once; but there was no fire in the cooking stove and a slight covering of dust on the tables and furniture indicated that the cottage had been vacant for several days.

The front door opened into a main living room, plainly but comfortably furnished. Opening from this to the left was a sleeping room with bed neatly made; in the rear of the living room was a dining room with a simple table laid for two, and opening from this, behind the sleeping room, a kitchen. That was all: there was no cellar or upper story, and the rear wall of the dining room and kitchen constituted the rear wall of the building, which fitted so closely against the face of the cliff as to leave no opening at all from the outside between them.

He carefully examined this wall from the inside but could find no sign of an opening, sounded it but could detect nothing—except that in the dining room he fancied there was a very slight difference in the reverberation in some places when he knocked upon the wall; but this was so slight and indefinite that it might easily be only fancy.

With entirely new and strange theories suggested to his mind by these discoveries he again visited the

shifting sands and made a new and careful examination that day and the two succeeding days which satisfied him that all his crude theories about it had been entirely wrong. Instead of being affected by different conditions of weather and atmosphere, as he had supposed, it was evident that this deposit was forced out through openings in the side of the canyon by a running stream of water which seeped through and under the deposit and made its way imperceptibly into the creek; and the changes in size and shape of the deposit were simply due to variations in the quantity brought down by the stream. During these three days there was apparently no addition from above, and as the action of the water underneath gradually wore away the lower end of the deposit, carrying the sand out into Bitter Creek, it was appreciably diminishing in size.

He next addressed himself to a more careful examination of the sand than he had made before, chemical and microscopical, which revealed the fact that it was not the product of natural action, but recently pulverized by some kind of machinery, and recently subjected to the action of chemicals!

Careful inquiry disclosed that the man who built the cottage had been in Bitter Creek about eighteen months, and lived in it with the woman supposed to be his wife; that he was seldom seen about the village and had no known occupation; that about a year ago a number of cases, heavy but not very large, had come to him by freight from the East, which had been carted to the cottage by the natural road which led to it from the station along the continuation of that terrace-like formation on which the cottage was built and which came to an end a few rods beyond it; that no one knew anything about the contents of these cases or the identity of the man or woman, or where they came from; and that neither of them had been seen for at least two weeks.

Having completed his report, with many details here omitted, Gardner summed up his conclusions in this amazing abstract:—

1. That they had been anticipated in the search for Karlium.

2. That in a subterranean cavern under Table Rock Hill the mineral was then, or had very recently been mined in the most scientific way—from beneath the deposits.

3. That these operations included the use of rock-crushing machinery of some kind, operated by power, and of chemical processes.

4. That these operations were conducted by an unknown man, so far as could be learned without associates, who had now mysteriously disappeared.

5. That the entrance to this cavern was probably in or near the cottage which this man and his female companion had occupied.

The interest and astonishment with which this report was listened to may be easily imagined, and its discussion was protracted until a late hour when, their plan of action decided upon, the party retired.

The following morning, after an early breakfast, the line of march was taken up, under the guidance of John Gardner, for the mysterious cottage on the rocky terrace of Table Rock Hill. Reaching it, the door was found unfastened, as Gardner had found and left it, and everything inside undisturbed and tallying with his description.

The dining room had been selected as the most promising base of operations. Unlike the other rooms, which were finished in the natural wood, the walls of this apartment were covered with paper of a rather gaudy and unusually complicated pattern, the blending of colors and figures being especially confusing to the eye.

"Here, Grigson, is an opportunity for the exercise of your skill", said Morley.

The detective promptly produced a powerful magnifying glass, and mounting a chair proceeded to a careful examination of the rear wall at a height of from seven to eight feet above the floor.

Very soon the glass stopped, moved slowly and carefully to the left about three feet, when it stopped again and began to move downward in a straight

line. At four feet from the floor it stopped once more and began to move to the left in gradually enlarging circles covering every inch of space. Suddenly it stopped for the last time and the detective, who had conducted his operations in perfect silence, still without a word reached around to his hip pocket, produced a revolver which he cocked, and holding this in his right hand began pressing with the thumb of his left upon a dark figure in the paper.

For an instant there was no result; then suddenly a door swung inward, opening three or four inches, and seizing it by the edge Grigson threw it wide open.

The first stage of the search had justified Gardner's theory, for before them was an open passage leading straight into the heart of the hill.

This passage, at the opening only about the size of the door and giving evidence of having been artificially enlarged, a few feet beyond swelled to considerably larger though very irregular proportions, and evidently the undisturbed handiwork of natural forces. It appeared to be about sixty feet in length, and to open at the further end into a larger space, which was artificially lighted.

CHAPTER XV.

Intensely interested and not a little excited by this strange discovery, the party prepared to explore the subterranean regions which, silent and mysterious, awaited them. Professor Karl insisted upon heading the procession. The detective, a trusty revolver in each hand, followed him closely, Gardner, the only other member of the company who had a weapon with him, took third place, and the others followed at a little distance.

The passage was of very irregular shape and size, with walls of broken rock, but a fairly level floor and of sufficient dimensions at the narrowest part to admit three men marching abreast.

The Herr Professor had no more than glanced into the larger opening at the end of the passage than he

turned suddenly, and, raising his hands in strong excitement, fairly drove his companions backward.

"Go back! Go back!!" he said, "You must go back!"

When they had returned to the dining room, Professor Karl rushed to a portmanteau he had brought with him and opened it, ejaculating meanwhile,

"You must wait yet a little. I must go first alone."

From the portmanteau he produced a garment which he quickly put on. It was a flowing robe made of some material resembling silk, with very fine metallic threads woven into the fabric. When adjusted, it covered him completely from head to foot, and without an opening or visible seam. The sleeves terminated in gloves of the same material, and the hood which covered the head had eye-pieces adjusted in it, of thick glass, tinted green.

"You must wait here until I return," he said. "Dere iss no danger. I vill come back soon und den you can go in."

After about ten minutes—which seemed very long ones to those who waited,—the Herr Professor returned. He had removed and evidently left in the cavern his strange robe, and his face wore a very grave expression. Taking the portmanteau in his hand, he simply said "Now come," and led the silent procession through the passage and into the interior of Table Rock Hill.

At about sixty feet from the entrance, the passage opened abruptly into a large vaulted cavern, of irregular shape, the average dimensions of which were about one hundred feet in length, fifty feet in width, and twenty to forty feet in height. The floor was nearly level, of rock with some sand and occasional small stones. The ceiling was vaulted in general contour, and higher at the further end. The walls, as well as the ceiling, were very irregular, being composed of great broken masses of rock protruding in all shapes and sizes, and the whole cavern had evidently been produced by some tre-

mendous convulsion of nature. Its atmosphere was dry and pure.

The further half was lighted by several incandescent electric lamps attached to the rocky walls and hanging from overhead; and from the further end came a soft, whirring sound, in which could be distinguished the flow of water and the peculiar tone of electrical machinery in smooth but very rapid motion.

At about the center of the cavern, near the right side, was a couch or divan, with colored blankets and cushions. Four or five rough chairs were placed near this and between it and the only other article of furniture, which was a plain home-made table, standing almost exactly in the center of the room.

Above this table depended an electric lamp, more brilliant than the others. Its light fell full upon the only article on the table, which was a casket about six inches long by three in width and depth, made of heavy glass sides and tightly adjusted top of the same material; and lining the bottom were metallic electrodes, to which at either end were connected insulated wires leading up and, pendant from the ceiling, away to the machinery at the further end of the cavern.

The bottom of this casket was covered to the depth of about an inch, with a granular substance, looking like coarse salt but of dazzling whiteness.

But the light fell also upon two other objects, which first caught and riveted the attention of the invaders.

Seated in chairs by the table, with elbows resting on it and with eyes and expression fixed with intense interest upon the casket, were the motionless figures of a man and a woman.

The Herr Professor advanced, and placing his hand upon the man's shoulder reverently and pityingly, said:

"Der poor peobles! Dey did not know. Dey are like der hard, hard rocks, alretty."

It was literally true. Bereft of life by some force so inconceivably swift in its fatal action that the expression of their faces had no time to

change even in the least degree, this man and woman were now transformed, presumably by the same mysterious power, into statues of solid stone, as hard as the walls of the cavern.

Too profoundly impressed for speech, the little party turned upon Professor Karl inquiring looks which he could not fail to interpret as an appeal for some explanation of this terrible mystery. Touching the casket with his hand he said:

"Dis, mein friends, iss chloride of Karlum. In dis liddle gasket iss, I should say, four million marks, or almost one million of your dollars. It iss now inert and harmless. What it vill do in contact with der life tissue, you know from dot case of der poor Herr De Costa. But excited by a powerful electric gurrent, it becomes a fearful engine of destruction. Ven I come in here, der gurrent vas turned on, und it mean instant death to all living objects, not brotected, dot come in der radius. Dot poor man did not know. He turn on der gurrent und dey look. Ven it reach der potential, der emanations bombard all near objects mit velocity inconceivable. It strike dem deat so quick as lightning flash. Den der bombardment of der atoms go on, hour after hour, until every cell is filled und solidified, und dey are like der rocks of der hill. Indeed perhaps dose rocks are made in der same vay, ven der awful convulsion of nature excite dose elemental substances in der ages past. Who can tell? I see dese bodies ven I first look in—und den I know; und I brotect meinself mit der robe, und turn off der gurrent."

During the Herr Professor's explanation, Grigson, whose accomplishments included division as well as concentration of attention, had been keenly inspecting the features of the statue that was so recently a man, and as Professor Karl finished he spoke, even his imperturbable calm showing a faint ripple of excitement on its surface.

"I know this man," said Grigson, "and I think we are close upon the key to the mysterious murder of Mr. De Costa. His name is, or was, Richard Murgatroyd, one of the most able,

adroit, and utterly conscienceless natural criminals I ever knew—his only redeeming trait being his constancy to this good wife who has remained faithful to him through everything. He was an Englishman, and came to this country about thirty-three years ago. He had a fair commercial and some scientific education, with quick perceptions and more than ordinary natural ability and shrewdness. Soon after his arrival he obtained an office position with the house of Henry Von Post, whose daughter married Mr. De Costa, and who was then engaged in a banking business with the financing of mining propositions as a specialty. In a short time he rose to the position of Mr. Von Post's private secretary and confidential man. A few years later I was employed in a private inquiry. Some papers had been forged in connection with a large transaction between the houses of Von Post and De Costa. I was young and enthusiastic in my profession then and worked hard and carefully in the case. F. De Costa & Co. were defrauded out of some fifty thousand dollars by the forgery and all the circumstantial evidence in the case pointed to Mr. Von Post as the perpetrator, or instigator of the crime. I became satisfied however, that Mr. Von Post did not receive the money. knew nothing of the forgery, and that this man Murgatroyd had conceived and executed the whole scheme, managing with most subtle and devilish ingenuity so that all the threads seemed to lead to the employer who had trusted and befriended him. I had not yet succeeded in tracing the money, (which had mysteriously disappeared) nor had I gone far enough to make out a case on my theory that would stand in court, when I laid my report of progress, conclusions, and reasons in support of them before Mr. De Costa who was my employer in the case. He expressed himself as entirely satisfied of the correctness of my theory, but instructed me to take no further action until I heard from him. Three days later he sent for me and to my great surprise told me the matter had been privately arranged and the inquiry was to

be dropped. A few days after that I saw a notice of his marriage to Mr. Von Post's daughter. Evidently no suspicion of the truth came to Mr. Von Post's mind, for his confidence in Murgatroyd continued undisturbed and Murgatroyd's influence over his employer seemed to increase. Shortly, the fortunes of the house of Von Post began to decline, losses and reverses following each other at intervals. I have no doubt the fortunes of Murgatroyd correspondingly increased, but he was far too cunning to let any evidences of this appear. For many years the business was kept going but finally Mr. Von Post decided to wind it up, and did so, having as I understood, quite a considerable remnant left of his once large fortune. There had been some domestic troubles it was said—at all events Mrs. Von Post went abroad, and about three years ago her husband, still accompanied by Murgatroyd, went West—to the Pacific coast somewhere, report had it. I have heard nothing of either of them since."

While yet speaking, Grigson's keen exploring glance had taken note of an object of interest lying on the couch, and he proceeded to examine it. It was a long folding bill-case of leather, such as may be carried in the breast pocket of a man's coat, and contained some bank notes and several folded papers. One of these was written closely in German, and was at once recognized by Professor Karl, being in his own handwriting. It was, as he explained, a detailed description of the nature and characteristics of Karlium, and gave the writer's theories and conclusions as to where and how the mineral was to be found; concluding with the deduction from scientific data that a deposit should exist on the American Continent at or near the center of a square formed by Longitude West from Washington 31 and 32 degrees, and Latitude 41 and 42 degrees, south of or below the termination of the continental divide, and west of the 12th guide meridian.

The document contained instructions for the chemical recovery of the salts up to the precipitation of the chloride, and concluded with the statement that

further refinement, being accomplished by the aid of high electric potentials, should not be attempted except under the most expert scientific guidance.

This paper, the Herr Professor said, had been prepared for and delivered to his old friend De Costa.

In the same compartment of the bill-case was a letter in Mr. De Costa's handwriting. A corner of the paper, on which evidently the date had been written, was torn off. The letter read as follows:

"My dear Von ——— (the word following had been erased):

"In pursuance of our conversation a few days since when I met you in Hot Springs, I enclose with this the document in relation to the new mineral, and also a list of the lands I have acquired. Your knowledge of mining and mineralogy will guide you in this matter better than any suggestions I could make, and I will only say 'Go ahead according to your own judgment and I shall be satisfied.'

"If you want funds at any time, let me know, or draw on me, and when you have anything to report, let me hear from you.

"Unless Karl is mistaken (and he is not in the habit of making mistakes in such matters) there is a fine prospect in this, and I am sure that you will do the best that can be done to develop it.

"I also enclose copy of our agreement in this business, which I trust you will find correct.

"Sincerely yours,"

The signature was torn off and the list and copy referred to were missing.

"There now," said Grigson, admiringly, "just look at that! I tell you, gentlemen, when you see how the best—or the worst—of them sooner or later leave the key to their crimes somewhere, you can't doubt that there is an overruling Providence."

"Perhaps this is not as plain to us as it is to you, Grigson," said Morley. "Just what does this key unlock, to your mind?"

"Why it's as clear as a quill, sir," replied the detective. "Mr. De Costa

and Professor Karl here were old friends—were you not?"

"Glassmates in der University," assented the Herr Professor.

"Exactly. Well, he was over in Berlin and you explained your discovery to him and made arrangements that he was to look the matter up and find the deposits you had figured out were to be found in this country, and you were to go shares on the results."

Professor Karl nodded gravely. "Quite gorrect," said he.

"Well, Mr. De Costa comes back and makes up his mind that his father-in-law is the man for the business, knowing him to have experience and skill in such matters. Perhaps he thought there was something due him on old scores—but that is a side issue. Anyhow he wires him and they meet at Hot Springs and arrange the deal. Mr. De Costa takes the German paper back with him to New York, probably to have it copied, and sends it on later, with this letter and the other papers that are missing. Of course Murgatroyd gets hold of the whole thing, being still deep in Mr. Von Post's confidence. He sees the great chance of his life—gets rid of Von Post, forever I'm afraid—comes here—finds this hole—puts up the cottage—gets the machinery—and here he is, snug as a mole and with nothing to do but keep dark and grind out as much money as even his greed can desire. Everything is working fine and the precious stuff is gradually piling up into a little heap that he can take in a handbag, when he gets enough to suit him, skip across the water and exchange for millions, according to Professor Karl's figures. Then one fine day he looks up from where he is catching some fish for breakfast the next morning—and there is Miss De Costa looking down at him. Well it gets on his nerves right away. A man who knows his game is crooked has a mighty sensitive bundle of nerves inside, though he may keep them pretty well covered until something sudden happens. If he had the murder of his friend and benefactor on his soul also, as I am afraid he had, that made it worse for him. The

more he thought it over the more it scared him and the more he was convinced that the trouble a crook always fears will catch him in the end was on his trail. Then the next thing he knows here is Mr. Gardner searching and experimenting around on what he of course knows at once is a search for Karlum. What can he think except that he and Miss Grace are both here in the interests of her father whose rights he is burglarizing, as it were? Any moment his secret may be discovered and then it's all up with the great scheme of his life, and state's prison and probably the gallows staring him in the face. I'll warrant even he was rattled at first, and unless I am mistaken both Miss De Costa and Mr. Gardner skated closer to the danger sign here last fall than they had any idea of. But you can bet, gentlemen, that when he got so he could sit down for a cool think it didn't take that sharp brain of his long to strike the key to the situation. Gardner and Miss De Costa must be gotten away from here and kept away until he had time to finish his job and get over the pond with the big pile he had set his greedy heart on. And they must be gotten away without any fuss or excitement or suspicion being stirred up here. There was just one way to do it, and that was to strike at the fountain head. With Mr. De Costa murdered they would be called off from here fast enough, and no probability that they or anybody else would trouble him again before spring at least. He probably disguises himself—gets to New York—adds one more crime to his list—takes the next train out, leaving no trace that can be followed—gets back here and vanishes into this hole again, the danger removed, as he thinks. He works away all winter until finally he gets enough of that white salt there, so he thinks he must have a try at reducing it to the purest and most valuable form. His kind 'know it all,' generally—that is the reason we catch them—so he pays no attention to the professor's caution in this paper. He knows how to work the electricity all right, and he gets his poor wife in here to see him

do it. And then, just as he thinks the moment of his triumph has come, the hand of the Lord closes down on him—and here he is."

The detective's theory appeared to his auditors so logical and satisfactory as to call for no question or comment, and he quietly handed over to Mr. Stewart the third and only other document with which this narrative is concerned. This was in a separate compartment of the bill-case and was also in Mr. De Costa's handwriting.

It was a letter, beginning without address, and was enclosed in an envelope, unsealed and upon which was written only the preliminary word "For," as if the writer had been interrupted before completing the direction.

"When you reach this house—once your unhappy home—you will not find me, as perhaps you expected with dread, and it is for you to decide whether we shall meet again.

"I loved you, I think from the first moment, with a love the depth and strength of which I am sure you never realized or understood. It was the old story. I found I could not win you in the right way and I took the wrong. I used my power over your father growing out of certain business conditions, and you were practically forced into a marriage with me. As God is my judge I had but the one thought and purpose—an old story too, and full of tragedy—that I could and should win the love my soul so coveted.

"I learned my mistake and the learning so embittered my life, so hardened and changed my proud and wilful nature, that the results you know but too well followed. When the listless apathy into which you had drifted was first disturbed by a discovery you accidentally made, I realized that this disturbance had no tinge of jealousy in it. Your pride was touched, but not your love, and, my pride rising to meet yours, I resolutely sealed my lips and left you to think as you would. So you did not learn that Adele Grant is my own half-sister, estranged from the family since before I knew you by an ill-advised and most unfortunate marriage,

and that what you construed so differently was but my response to her appeal when by the death of this worthless husband, she was left penniless in a foreign land. But now, whatever your decision may be, I wish you to know the truth; and that it might be shown you beyond any question I cabled Adele to come to New York. She arrived from London this morning and has apartments at the Waldorf. As I write this I am expecting her here at any moment.

"It may be that hope is dead and these words but a requiem. But time and sorrow have softened me at least; and perhaps you, too, have felt their chastening touch. At all events, of late I have had new thoughts and dreamed new dreams. Grace is our child. My love is wholly yours, as it has been all these years. Can you find it in your heart at last to lay your hand in mine, dear love?"

"If you can, telegraph to the address below just one word—'Come.'"

Ferdinand."

True to his professional instincts, Grigson broke the momentary silence that followed the reading of this message from the dead, so strangely and terribly prevented from reaching the one for whom it was intended, with this conclusion:

"The murderer snatched that letter from Mr. De Costa's library table as he fled from the scene of his crime."

At the further end of the cavern a stream of water, evidently flowing in an underground, or under-rock channel from some great spring near the top of the hill, entered at the ceiling in one corner, rushed swiftly but quietly down an inclined trough-like bed, worn in the end wall, and vanished at the floor of the opposite corner into an opening which continued its hidden course toward Bitter Creek.

As the fall of this stream from entrance to exit, must have been between forty and fifty feet, the water was capable of developing a quite considerable power, and of this full advantage had been taken. By means of a compact but powerful turbine wheel, the fall had been harnessed and connected to drive an electric generator,

and this in turn to run a crusher of the most approved pattern. Through this it was evident that many tons of rock from the roof and sides of the cavern had been run, the finely crushed product treated with chemicals in vats, and the residuum, or "tailings" run off into the stream, which had brought them out to the surface near its junction with Bitter Creek, forming the shifting sands.

There was also a small dynamo supplying the electric lamps with current, and another machine of more unfamiliar type. Gardner and Professor Karl examined this with much curiosity and interest. It was connected with the generator, and from it extended the wires which terminated at the electrodes of the casket. Suddenly the Herr Professor rushed to the rheostat connected with this machine and taking one look at it ejaculated,

"Ach yes! It iss der Tesla oscillating gurrent!"

He turned, his eyes brilliant with excitement, and drew Doctor Raymond a little aside.

"Herr Doctor," said he, "you know what I tell you I belief ve gan do for der poor fraulein if ve haf der laboratory alreatty? Yes. Vell—der laboratory iss here! Eferything ve need iss here! You shall bring der fraulein and ve shall see!"

Doctor Raymond seemed to catch, in large degree, the German chemist's excitement, and summoning the other members of the party, a short consultation was held, with prompt and decisive results.

The two stone statues were carefully and reverently removed to an alcove which opened from one side of the cavern and was so nearly screened by the rocks and its own shape as to conceal them entirely from view. Then, leaving everything else undisturbed, the party returned to "The Great Western Hotel" where two telegrams were prepared, which Gardner took to the station and despatched. The first read:

"E. C. Harrison, Division Superintendent:

Kindly arrange at once for special engine to bring car 'Muriel' to Bitter

Creek. Receive orders from William Pettis. Arrange for high speed and right of way.

James Morley,
Chairman of the Board."

The second:

"William Pettis, Ogden:

Bring Grace, with your wife, Mrs. De Costa, and Phoebe here without delay. Present this to conductor private car 'Muriel,' which with special engine awaits your orders. This by direction of Doctor Raymond, who is here.

John Gardner."

As he entered the station to send these messages, the agent met him and said: "Mr. Gardner, I forgot to tell you that a few days ago I received an answer to the tracer you had me send to find who shipped a small express package here last fall to Miss Grace De Costa. The tracer got mislaid somewhere and has been all this time getting around. The package was sent by F. De Costa, New York city, express prepaid."

Gardner of course had heard from Grace the sad story of her father and mother, so far as she knew it. As the agent spoke, into the disc of his mental vision flashed a little white card. It had fallen from the box unnoticed when the miniature was removed, and Phoebe had found it on the rug. Printed on it with a pen, in small neat letters, were these words:

"From one who loves her."

And even as Gardner looked at it, the card seemed to grow somewhat larger. Presently it lifted itself, and floating upward took a place upon the wall in the picture gallery of Gardner's memory. And around it grew a frame of fadeless, fragrant violets.

CHAPTER XVI.

When he had seen the messages actually sent, Gardner calculated that in the ordinary course of things the special could not be expected to leave Ogden under two hours; and he realized that it would be much better for him to be occupied both in mind and body during that period of suspense. He therefore made his way back to the

cavern and devoted himself to a careful and thorough examination of the many things there which were of the greatest interest and importance to him and his work.

He timed his stay, however, so as to get back to the station in almost exactly two hours. As soon as he reached it, the operator handed him two telegrams:—

"No. 47 special, Conductor Donovan, Engineer Lynch, left Ogden 12:03."

The start had been made, then, nearly an hour sooner than he had supposed possible. It seemed a good omen, and his heart leaped at the thought. Eagerly he turned to the second telegram:—

"No. 47 special passed Echo 12:39."

Forty miles in thirty-six minutes! The special was flying eastward like a cannonball with its precious freight! The intimation in Morley's order that high speed was desired, had evidently impressed the operating department. Gardner walked rapidly over to the hotel and made report, returning to the station at once to watch for the next telegram which should be received now in a few moments.

"No. 47 special passed Evanston 1:15."

Thirty-six miles and exactly at the rate of a mile a minute. There was a longer stretch now from Evanston to Granger, and when he had once more reported to the hotel Gardner mechanically fell to pacing back and forth along the carriage road from the station, to and across the bridge over the canyon.

In all the strength of his vigorous young manhood, John Gardner was under tremendous stress of mind and body. The marvellous discoveries and events of the last few days, of such thrilling interest to him in a professional and scientific way, and of such grave importance to his personal fortunes (for he had taken a very considerable interest in the new company) would in themselves have been sufficient to produce a good deal of nerve exhaustion, even in a strong man.

But all this seemed as nothing compared with the strain of sorrow and anxiety steadily pulling upon him for

weeks past, and now intensified, even as it was lightened, by a hope so new and strange and incomprehensible that it fairly staggered thought. Grace De Costa had become the life of his life—heart of his heart. She was flying toward him at this moment, almost as on the wings of the wind. Toward him—and toward what else? Joy too great for belief? or final and hopeless despair?

To the Infinite economy, waste, and loss are unknown. From the cradle to grave, and presumably through all the eternity in which these are but mile-stones, every word spoken or unuttered, every thought kind or cruel, good or bad, every impression received or evolved by any of the senses, is garnered in the Storehouse of Somewhere. And any one of these at any time, be it lightly summoned, sought for with toil and pain or all unbidden and perhaps vainly repulsed with horror, dismay, and tears, is able to come back again to our consciousness. If we realized this,—as alas! we do not,—with what care would we make selection of the goods we consign to that Storehouse of Somewhere!

To John Gardner's tired brain, as he walked to and fro in his anxious vigil, the thing that came back all unbidden and unwelcome was the refrain of an uncanny song or chant which he had heard at a vaudeville in New York shortly before his first trip to Bitter Creek. Heard and supposedly forgotten the next day, for so far as he could see there was nothing to commend it to his memory. Neither words or music had any merit, and at the time he had but idly amused his transient thought in accounting for its brief vogue.

The singer was proclaimed to be a genuine Ethiopian. At all events he was a magnificent bronze statue of the athlete or gladiator type; and as Gardner had concluded, because of this perfect and majestic physique, because his voice was like the diapason stop of a great organ, with a subtle sob in it that might suggest the tragedy of unnumbered generations of dumb, undeveloped souls from which he had descended, it had pleased the

butterflies of the great fickle city to come and feast their eyes upon his grand bronze proportions, gaze in his great solemn eyes, and luxuriate in the creeping chills which that sob in the organ-like voice sent along their dainty spines.

There came back to Gardner at this time only the chorus or refrain—a monotonous barbaric chant, simply the reiteration of middle c, dropping to b, on the last two words:—

"Oh Lily, my love, my darling,
Oh Lily, my love, my dear,
I'd give my soul, my darling,
If Lily, my love, were here."

He resented its intrusion into his thoughts which he wanted to concentrate upon the grave matters of his anxiety. He did not recall at the same time that tale of soldiers on the eve of battle, when,

"Each heart supplied a different name
But all sang Annie Laurie."

So, not recognizing that auto-suggestion which no doubt brought the refrain back to him, he fought it vainly, as all of us have fought such haunts, even to anathematizing everything and everybody connected with the barbaric thing. And still as he paced to and fro, it droned its insistent monotony through his tired brain, routing connected thought and offending his throbbing temples.

"Oh, Lily, my love, my darling,
Oh Lily, my love, my dear,
I'd give my soul, my darling,
If Lily, my love, were here."

Back and forth, back and forth, until the weary anxious moments, haunted by that fiendish refrain, grew to seem like hours. Relief at last! The operator waves a yellow slip from his window and Gardner rushes to read:

"No. 47 special passed Granger 2:29."

Eighty miles in seventy-five minutes! Oh! brave and grand Tim Lynch, in your coal-grimed frock and overalls, with your strong hand on the lever, your face set in grim lines and your steady eyes to the front! Never was grander race than your steed of fire and steel is running this day! A race that is to win—grant it dear God—life, and hope and love!

"Oh, Lily, my love, my darling,
Oh Lily, my love, my dear—"

Are you back again, barbaric horror, with your tuneless monotony? Drawing the violin bow back and forth across one sobbing string may be all very well for a passing joke, but when it is drawn across a man's heart strings, don't you know it hurts? Don't you know he wants to think, and hope and pray?—

I'd give my soul, my darling,
If Lily, my love, were here."

Oh pitiless thing, why cannot that dirge-like monotony be broken? Why not, at least sometimes, go up on those last two words instead of always down? Upward are hope and sunshine. Downward lie the realms of despair—and something else that begins with "d"—something unthinkable!

Gardner flung himself aside from the beat he had been walking and turned to the operator's window. He had taken telegraphy in his technical course and he would listen for the first click of the next report. — - - -
— - - - - Yes, that is the call for Bitter Creek. The operator gives his answering signal and Gardner listens, breathlessly. — - - - -
- - - - - No. 47 - — - - -
- — - - - "Oh Lily, my love, my darling"—That pagan chant has torn the letters from his mind and with a gesture of despair Gardner turns aside and waits until the written message is handed out to him.

"No. 47 special passed Green River 2:56."

Thirty miles—twenty-seven minutes! The last reporting station was left behind and the flying special would soon be here. Gardner walked to the hotel and made report, remained there as long as his impatience and anxiety would permit, and then resumed his march between the station and the bridge. To and fro, back and forth, but never escaping the monotonous persistent chant that surged to and fro, back and forth through his weary and protesting consciousness. "I'd give my soul, my darling"—oh miserable thing of the wilds and the deserts, why persecute a civilized Christian with your un-

hallowed bribes, no doubt addressed to heathen Gods? And yet—and yet—what price so great, to powers of good or powers of evil, could the hand of this civilized Christian withhold if indeed, restored to all her sweet perfection of mind and body "Lily my love were here"?

Hark! Far down the valley the long, melodious note of No. 47's whistle shaking and quavering from the tremendous speed of the great steel monster's headlong rush! A moment of silence and again it comes, higher, stronger, nearer. And now his eager sense catches a smothered roar, as the flying mass hurls its thunder against some rocky ledge that echoes back the sound. Nearer, nearer still. He can catch the "click, click" that marks the time of the flying wheels upon the rail joints, and instantly it falls into the rhythm of the pagan chant—"Oh Lily, my love, my darling."

With a flash of light on polished brass, a swirl and a roar that makes the heart jump and the breath catch, the great engine rounds the curve like some Titanic missile, and a second later, panting like a sentient living thing after its terrible race, stops at the platform; and Lily, my love, is here.

For many a day, Tim Lynch of strong, coal-blackened face and steady eyes, shall the tale be told in office and station, train-shed, round-house, and caboose, of how you and your great pet, engine No. 47, broke all records, whirling the chairman's special across Wyoming, 246 miles in 240 minutes!

Grace De Costa was the first to alight from the "Muriel." John Gardner stood to receive and assist her with arms outstretched and all the silent eloquence of love in his face.

She placed her hands in his and accepted their support with a gentle smile; but there was no trace of recognition in the deep violet eyes, and her serene gaze passing over and through him as if he did not exist, rested wistfully upon the distant summits of the Sweetwater mountains. As she stepped upon the platform a patient little smile flitted across her face

and she said in a low, soft, wistful cadence of her sweet voice;

"They are so far, so far away."

The men from "The Great Western Hotel" had reached the station just before the special arrived, and with but a few words of partial explanation the whole party at once set forth along the cliff road to the deserted cottage. During the walk a general account of the events and discoveries at Table Rock was given to the new-comers, and they reached the wonderful cavern and looked upon its central object—the casket of still more wonderful and mysterious contents,—with minds too profoundly impressed for much speech.

Grace De Costa had not spoken at all, and when they entered the cavern, watchful and loving Phoebe, noticing certain signs which she had learned to understand, led her at once to the couch and had no sooner made her comfortable there than the violet eyes closed and she was lost in one of those long periods of sleep which came to her at intervals.

The question of procedure had been fully discussed and settled upon before telegraphing to Ogden in the morning, and among other things it had been considered whether an attempt should be made to spare Mrs. De Costa by withholding the letter from her husband until she had passed through the other stress and anxiety that must come to her.

But the decision had followed Morley's view, who said he believed such momentous occasions come to our lives under the direction of some higher power, and the best way is to accept its apparent purposes and meet things fairly and squarely as they are presented, believing that the same power will supply strength according to our needs.

Accordingly the letter was handed to her and the whole party stood in reverent silence while she read it. She turned aside for a moment after she had finished reading, and then bravely facing to the front again, stood waiting with the others for what was to follow.

Doctor Raymond had been delegated

to explain the sudden summons from Ogden and its purpose. He said:

"My friends, it is really Professor Karl who should speak to you, but as he is,—I think unnecessarily,—distrustful of his English, he has asked me to explain his theory and belief which are responsible for your presence here. I can only do so in the briefest manner, and I fear very imperfectly, for it is not easy to express extraordinary things in ordinary language; but I must do as well as I can.

"The Herr Professor believes that the minds and the material bodies of human beings constitute simply as one might say the dwelling place, with its furnishings, in which we pass this mortal stage of our journey, the beginning and the end of which are entirely beyond the scope of our apprehension. That the mind and body together make up a marvellous and intricate piece of mechanism designed for the purposes of our mortal stage of existence. But all this mechanism is, in itself, just as inert and devoid of independent motive force as yonder machines of brass and steel. The vital power which starts and maintains them in action, and as we commonly use the expressions in life and intelligence—is an entirely distinct entity; and, being spiritual and not material, it cannot be perceived or understood by the finite senses.

"He believes that in the case of our dear Grace, the connection, or the harmonious relation, between the life-force which is spiritual and the material mechanism through which it is expressed and conveyed to our senses, has in some way been broken or disturbed. We have no perceptions or instrumentalities which can detect or locate this interruption of the harmony; and, if we had, probably no means of repairing it.

"But the Herr Professor believes that if any means of such repair exists and is available to us, it is likely to be the bringing of the subject under the direct influence of one of the elemental vital forces of the universe in as nearly a pure state as it can be and still remain perceptible to our senses.

Such a force is Karlium, since in its nearest feasible approach to the pure state it is an independent vital force.

"It is true that no man knows this thing to be correct, for it has never been demonstrated. All we can say is that Professor Karl believes it to be a reasonable probability that if Grace were subjected to what we may describe as a stream of the vitalized emanations from (almost) pure Karlium, the lost harmony might be restored through a finer application of that same principle which causes the harmonious rearrangement of material particles by the application of a perfectly uniform stream of influence such as water, air, sound, or electricity.

"For myself, I can only say that I have most profound respect for the Herr Professor's learning, ability, and opinions. He informs me that he finds here everything necessary to the experiment, and positively assures me that whether it may prove successful or not, it involves no possible danger of injury to Grace. This being the case, and as I certainly know of nothing else that offers the slightest hope of benefit, I have no personal hesitation in favoring the experiment. We thought best to summon you here without delay and submit the matter to you. And now, with you, my friends, who include all that are nearest to her in the world, the decision rests."

The response of all those addressed, who had listened in almost breathless silence, was instant and unanimous. The experiment should be tried, and at once.

"Professor Karl wishes me to say to you," continued Doctor Raymond, "that the experiment, or rather the preparation for it, will involve some rather startling phenomena, for which you should be prepared, understanding that the peculiar electrical force used differs entirely from the forms of current that are familiar to us, and accepting his assurance that there will not be the least danger of injury to anyone. I accept this assurance fully for myself, and trust you will all do so." The speaker paused an instant and then, as if moved by some reverent im-

pulse such as the circumstances and occasion might well evoke, he added the quotation:

"Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed; for the Lord thy God is with thee, whithersoever thou goest."

The Herr Professor at once prepared for the work before him. From his portmanteau he took a piece of the same odd, silky material with the fine metallic threads in it of which the robe he had worn on his first entry into the cavern was made. From this he fashioned a jacket which neatly covered the casket of Karlium chloride, adjusting it very carefully so that there should be no exposure of the top or any side, but leaving the bottom resting upon the table as before. Then from the same receptacle he took a small jar of some chemical in paste-like form, and with this and the aid of a brush he completely painted over the silky cover or jacket, until it looked like a piece of white marble.

Carefully inspecting the wire connections, he then made a motion of his hand to Gardner, who evidently understood its meaning; for, stopping but a second to look upon the beautiful sleeping girl so dear to him, as he passed her, he went like a soldier to his post of duty, at the further end of the cavern.

After a rapid inspection of the machinery with which he had thoroughly familiarized himself earlier in the day, he signalled to the Herr Professor that all was in readiness. Professor Karl, his eyes fixed upon the casket, or rather its now opaque covering, raised his hand. Gardner threw on the switch of the Tesla oscillating current machine, and grasping the knob of the rheostat turned it slowly and steadily to the right. As the arm passed over the little copper discs, one by one, the sensitive needle of the voltmeter just above and opposite his eyes followed, indicating the voltage delivered. As this needle passed the figures, Gardner announced them to Professor Karl.

As indicated by Doctor Raymond, the peculiar oscillating current produced by this machine and named after its discoverer, Nikola Tesla, differs en-

tirely from other currents; and voltages which in these would be inconceivably destructive may be, in the Tesla current, produced and utilized with impunity. It is said, indeed, that the inventor has taken a million volts of this current through his body without injury.

Nevertheless it is not strange that to the little company in the cavern, the scene, the occasion, and the figures announced by Gardner were profoundly impressive. Steadily the needle of the voltmeter moved to the right around the clock-like face of that marvellous instrument. A thousand volts—ten thousand—twenty—fifty—an hundred thousand! Still the Herr Professor's hand was raised—two—three—four hundred thousand! The air in the cavern was almost crackling and seemed to tingle with excitement. The rough faces of the rocks and the hair and clothing of the people grew luminous as if touched with phosphorus.

Five hundred thousand volts! The Herr Professor's hand partly dropped, as a signal to Gardner to hold the current at that point. And in an instant a marvellous thing happened! As if in a flash of lightning, the opaque covering of the casket entirely disappeared! The men, who were grouped around the table watching, started back in involuntary terror, but Professor Karl hastened to reassure them.

"Do not fear—dere iss no danger. Der mantle iss still covering der gasket—if it were not you would be dead before you haf time to start. Der salts are now oxcited to deir most terrific activity and dey haf made der mantle transparent; but chemically it iss still perfect und der emanations cannot pass through. Soon ve shall take away der danger part."

Relieved from their involuntary terror, the men resumed their places around the table and gave their eager attention to the casket. The salt-like crystals, now plainly visible, were in active though perfectly harmonious motion. In rapid, rhythmical movement they were grinding against each other, like the sand through which you may have seen a mountain spring boiling to the surface. After a little

it was apparent that each crystal was being slightly reduced in size by attrition and the chemical action of the tremendous electrical current passing through them. The bulk of the casket's contents had been reduced just perceptibly when the Herr Professor signalled and Gardner threw open the switch and shut the current off.

As suddenly as it had vanished the mantle reappeared, exactly the same in appearance as before, and shut the contents of the casket from view. Professor Karl waited about five minutes, then carefully lifted the mantle, set it on the table, removed the top of the casket, and on the contents—which was now to all appearance inert—poured a few drops of colorless liquid from a small bottle covered with lead.

Then he replaced cover and mantle, and taking from his portmanteau a piece of the silky cloth, he tore it into strips about an inch in width, from which he fashioned a sort of net around the casket, and outside the mantle, leaving knotted ends loose at the top so that the whole could be lifted and suspended by them, (as he proved by careful trial) in a level position.

These arrangements completed to his satisfaction he signalled Gardner to turn on the current again, and, the needle of the voltmeter crept steadily around until five hundred thousand volts pressure was indicated. At this point the mantle vanished as before, and the Karlum crystals were again revealed in the same state of activity. But this time the Herr Professor's uplifted hand still held its position, and Gardner, white of face but steady as a rock, slowly turned the knob of the rheostat to the right. Six hundred thousand—seven—eight—nine—a million volts! Hold there, John Gardner!

The little group were literally appalled by the inconceivable force exerted in their presence. The women, who were waking, covered their eyes and trembled. The men's faces were white and drawn. The atmosphere of the cavern seemed instinct with life, and vibrated as if in a terrified effort to escape. The rough and broken

faces of the rocks were luminous, and from their sharp points wavering pencils of blue-tinted light reached out toward other points and met with a crackling noise. The people appeared as if clothed in garments of soft, long fur, and the fur was incandescent, shading from flame color into blue.

In the casket the salts writhed and boiled with redoubled activity. Thus for perhaps three minutes, which seemed like hours—and then, in the twinkling of an eye, each tiny crystal seemed to open and swallow up its neighbor! The salts had utterly vanished, and in its place was a liquid, golden and luminous. In density it seemed about half-way between water and quick-silver; in color it was indescribable, unless it be compared to the soft golden light of the setting sun imprisoned and liquified by some inconceivable pressure.

The Herr Professor's uplifted hand dropped, and as it did so long tongues of flame shot out from the end of each finger and striking the rock floor rolled away in balls of ghost-fire, until they vanished in the cracks and fissures. Gardner threw open the switch and came forward to join the group whose eager and wondering regards were fixed upon the casket.

A marvel indeed was being revealed to them, for although the electric current no longer flowed through the casket, the mantle still remained transparent and the liquid continued in ceaseless motion. It had settled into a long, smooth swell, from one end of the casket to the other, and back again. And by some subtle spell, as the gaze rested upon it, all sense of proportion seemed to be lost, and the small quantity of golden liquid, flowing back and forth in smooth swells within the confines of that little casket, appeared to have all the imposing dignity, all the limitless power and grandeur of the long deep swell of waters in mid-ocean, majestic and unconfined.

"Mein friends," said the Herr Professor, impressively, "you now stand as near as you ever can, in der flesh, to der meeting point of spirit und matter. Der liquid in der gasket iss pure Karlium, combined only with der

liquified gas dot iss its closest affinity. We do not know der gas much, because it gannot be isolated. Chemistry could separate dem—but it would be useless, for both vould instantly vanish from all our perceptions, und return into der mind of der Infinite from whence dey came."

Professor Karl had brought with him from the hotel a folding tripod such as photographers use. He now adjusted this so that its apex was directly over Grace De Costa's face at a height of about three feet. Lifting the casket carefully by the knotted upper ends of the strips he had fashioned about it, he suspended it from this tripod. Although the ebb and flow of the strange liquid continued in ceaseless motion, the casket hung motionless; and as the strips became transparent and invisible wherever they touched the casket or mantle, it appeared as if suspended in the air entirely without support.

The mantle covering its top and sides, although invisible, evidently stopped, by some chemical property, all perceptible emanations from the liquid. But the bottom, of heavy glass inside of which were the metallic electrodes (now entirely transparent) had no such effect; and as the liquid moved back and forth in those long majestic swells, a flood of light poured from it straight upon the lovely upturned face of the sleeping girl. This light cannot be described. It was as soft as summer moonlight, and yet so instinct with the most intense vitality that words can convey no adequate idea of the impression it made upon the perceptions of those who saw and can never forget it.

The men were grouped at a respectful distance, their rapt and breathless attention fixed upon the marvel before them. Mrs. Pettis, speechless with agitation, sat rigidly in a chair. Phoebe excited but erect, fearless and vigilant, stood close by her charge; and at the foot of the couch, her face buried in her hands which still held Ferdinand De Costa's letter, knelt a stately and beautiful woman in black, praying for the quick and the dead.

In tenderness and love, oh Angels of the Most High, bear upward this

and all such other of our poor and faltering petitions as are in truth "the soul's sincere desire, uttered or unexpressed." Not to inform Infinite Wisdom of our needs, not to ask of Infinite Love that which is given before we ask, but only that the struggle of the spirit may prevail against the bonds of mortal ignorance and weakness. After what manner dost thou pray, oh woman in sombre garb? Not for surcease of sorrow and suffering, for these are but poisonous vines growing from the root called sin, which is infraction of the law. Not for forgiveness of sin for sin has no existence. Like the wrong figure in a sum, or a discord in music, it sore affronts us with its false pretense; but to find and correct these is to demonstrate their utter nothingness, and so when run down and confronted, this fearsome dragon, sin, must confess that it is only a mistake and vanish into the void of darkness. For could our eyes see clearly, and could we really know how utterly futile is any effort to evade the law, how false all promises of advantage from breaking it, and how sure the retribution that must follow the offense, where would one be found so weak and foolish as to try the path? All through the ages man has battled against the immutable law of the universe, struggling to overthrow or set it aside in favor of some rule of action which deludes his fancy by the false pretense that it will better serve his personal pleasure or selfish interest. The shores of time are strewn with broken and bleeding wrecks which attest his failure; yet he still maintains the stubborn, hopeless fight, still with fatuous confidence hugs his delusion that by hook or crook he can get a little more than his share of the things his fancy covets. And so the epitome of all earth's sin and sorrow, suffering and shame, is written in the pitifully simple words, "It is all a mistake!" Wherefore, fair and gentle woman, pray thus and for us all:

"Infinite Spirit of Truth, even as the vitalizing radiance that comes from Thee now falls upon the face of this sleeping girl, so let the light of Thy spirit illumine our earth-darkened consciousness, until ignorance, error, and delusion shall vanish into their

native nothingness, as darkness melts before the sunshine. Then shall we understand Thy way, and so understanding, all good things shall be added unto us and that be fulfilled which is written—Thy children shall know the truth, and from all sin and pain and sorrow the truth shall make them free, Amen."

For such space of time as these words have filled, the sleeping girl still peacefully slept on. Then up into her fair face slowly crept a faint rosy flush; a soft smile as from some pleasant dream moved her lips—and presently the long fringes of her eyelids lifted, and her clear eyes, quite unstartled, gazed straight up into the marvellous radiance that fell upon her from the casket. Then she moved and slowly rising sat up upon the couch. Like a little child waking from sleep, and misdoubting that the world is but another dream, she passed her hands across her eyes for reassurance. And then, with a low glad cry "Oh my love, my love!" she sprang to her feet and into John Gardner's open arms.

But even this dear enfolding could not shut out another new and subtle sense that had somehow reached her awakened consciousness, for in a moment she lifted her head, and crying "My mother—I know it is my mother!" was clasped to Corona's heart.

To recount the explanations that followed would be but repetition; to attempt to convey any idea of the happiness that filled the cavern full, would be simply to fail. At last Grace was fully convinced that it was all real, and that she had not reawakened in Heaven as was her first impression.

The Herr Professor's wonderful experiment had succeeded; the Secret of Table Rock had been revealed; the newly-found elemental force had strangely and impressively punished the misuse of its power and rewarded the faith of those whose hearts were pure and whose purposes were good. And now the time had come to return to the work-a-day world.

By common consent, John Gardner and Grace De Costa headed the little procession out of the cavern. His strong right arm shamelessly encircled her slender waist, and her golden-brown

head rested against his shoulder in the abandon of perfect love and trust.

As they stepped from the door of the cottage the golden light of the setting sun fell upon them in all its caressing splendor. And from their happy faces was reflected back the radiance of those other elementals which come in all their spiritual purity straight from the Master Mind. These unite with no material affinities, and the finite senses may not perceive them; but if we only knew how to break down the barriers of ignorance, prejudice, and error, to sweep aside the clogging dust of ages and drink

them in as the waters of everlasting life, what sorrow, pain, or infirmity could withstand their healing power? If we but knew!

Sweet Charity, which like the benediction of fading twilight tenderly softens and then covers from censorious sight the multitude of our mistakes; Faith and Hope, the angels of thought by whose wings alone we are upborne through all the joys and sorrows, tears and fears, of this mortal stage in our eternal journey. And behold, the greatest of these is Love.

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